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ILLUSTRATIONS

OF THE

BOOK OF PROVERBS.

[redacted]

Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth.

ILLUSTRATIONS

OF THE

BOOK OF PROVERBS.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM ARNOT,

ST. PETER'S FREE CHURCH, GLASGOW.

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TO THE READER.

WHILE, as a series of practical comments upon texts selected from a Book of Scripture, the two volumes now published constitute one whole; yet, from the nature of the subjects, and the manner in which they have been treated, each is complete in itself, and independent of the other. For the sake of those who may see this volume first, or this volume only, the explanatory note which was prefixed to the former volume is reprinted here:—

These Illustrations of the Proverbs are not critical, continuous, exhaustive. The comments, in imitation of the text, are intended to be brief, practical, miscellaneous, isolated. The reader may, however, perceive a principle of unity running through the whole, if he take his stand at the outset on the writer's view-point—a desire to lay the Christian System along the surface of common life, without removing it from its foundations in the doctrines of Grace. The authority of the instructions must be divine: the form transparently human. Although the lessons should, with a pliant familiarity, lay themselves along the line of men's thoughts and actions, they will work no deliverance, unless redeeming love be everywhere the power to press them in. On the other hand, although evangelical doctrine be consistently maintained throughout, the teaching will come short of its purpose unless it go right into every crevice of a corrupt heart, and perseveringly double every turn of a crooked path. Without "the love wherewith He loved us" as our motive power, we cannot reach

for healing any of the deeper ailments of the world : but having such a power within our reach, we should not leave it dangling in the air ; we should bring it down, and make it bear on every sorrow that afflicts, and every sin that defiles humanity. The two extremes to be avoided are, abstract, unpractical speculation, and shallow, powerless, heathen morality ; the one a soul without a body, the other a body without a soul—the one a ghost, the other a carcass. The aim is, to be doctrinal without losing our hold of earth, and practical without losing our hold of heaven.

Most certain it is that if the Church at any period, or any portion of the Church, has fallen into either of these extremes, it has been her own fault ; for the Bible, her standard, is clear from both imputations. Christ is its subject and its substance. His word is like Himself. It is of heaven, but it lays itself closely around the life of men. Such is the Bible ; and such, in their own place and measure, should our expositions of it be.

Had our object been a critical exposition of the Book, it would have been our duty to devote the larger share of our attention to the more difficult parts. But our aim from first to last has been more to apply the obvious than to elucidate the obscure, and the selection of texts has been determined accordingly. As there is diversity of gifts, there should be division of labour. While scientific inquirers re-examine the joints of the machine, and demonstrate anew the principles of its construction, it may not be amiss that a workman should set the machine a-going, and try its effects on the affairs of life.

W. A.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

OF THE

BOOK OF PROVERBS.

I.

THE ALL-SEEING.

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"—PROVERBS xv. 3, 11.

THE omniscience of God is usually considered a fundamental doctrine of natural religion. Nobody denies it. Infidelity in this department is acted, not spoken. Speculative unbelievers are wont, in a free and easy way, to set down at least a very large proportion of the existing Christian profession to the credit of hypocrisy. Hypocrite is a disreputable name, and most men would rather impute it to a neighbour than acknowledge it their own: but it is one thing to repudiate the word, and another to be exempt from the thing which it signifies. That weed seems to grow as freely on the soil of natural religion as in the profession of Christian faith. A man may be a

hypocrite although he abjures the Bible. Most of those who reject a written revelation profess to learn from the volume of creation that a just God is everywhere present, beholding the evil and the good; but what disciple of Nature lives consistently with even his own short creed?

The doctrine of the divine omniscience, although owned and argued for by men's lips, is neglected or resisted in their lives. The unholy do not like to have a holy Eye ever open over them, whatever their profession may be. If fallen men, apart from the one Mediator, say or think that the presence of God is pleasant to them, it is because they have radically mistaken either their own character or his. They have either falsely lifted up their own attainments, or falsely dragged down the standard of the Judge.

Atheism is the inner spirit of all the guilty, until they be reconciled through the blood of the cross. All image worship, whether heathen or Romish, is Atheism incarnate. The idol is a body which men, at Satan's bidding, prepare for their own enmity against God. The gods many and lords many that thickly strew the path of humanity over time, are the product ever and anon thrown off by the desperate wriggle of the guilty to escape from the look of an all-seeing Eye, and so be permitted to do their deeds in congenial darkness. When spiders stretched their webs across the eylids of Jupiter, notwithstanding all the efforts that Greek sculpture had put forth to make the image awful, the human worshipper would hide, without scruple, in his heart the thoughts which he did not wish his deity

to know. It was even an express tenet of the heathen superstitions that the authority of the gods was partial and local. One who was dreadful on the hills might be safely despised in the valleys. In this feature, as in all others, the Popish idolatry, imitative rather than inventive, follows the rut in which the ancient current ran. Particular countries and classes of persons are assigned to particular saints. With puerile perseverance, the whole surface of the earth and the whole course of the year have been mapped and appropriated, so that you cannot plant a pin point either in time or space without touching the territory of some Romish god or goddess. In this way the ignorant devotee practically escapes from the conviction of an omniscient Witness. "Divide and conquer" is the maxim of the enemy when he tries to deaden or destroy that sense of divine inspection which seems to spring native in the human mind. When he cannot persuade a man that there is no such witness, he persuades him, as the next best, that there are a thousand. When a man will not profess to have no god, the same end is accomplished by giving him many.

We sometimes feel and express surprise that rational beings should degrade themselves by worshipping blind, dumb idols, which their own hands have made; but it is precisely because the idols are blind and dumb that men are willing to worship them. A god or a saint that should really cast the glance of a pure eye into the conscience of the worshipper would not long be held in repute. The grass would grow again round that idol's shrine. A seeing god would not do: the idolater wants

a blind one. The first cause of idolatry is a desire in an impure heart to escape from the look of the living God, and none but a dead image would serve the turn.

From history and experience it appears that idolaters prefer to have an image that looks like life, provided always that it be not living. A real omniscience they will not endure; but a mimic omniscience pleases the fancy, and rocks the conscience into a sounder sleep. In the present generation the Romish craftsmen have tasked their ingenuity to make the eyes of their pictured saints move upon the canvass. The eyeball of a certain saint rolled, or seemed to roll, in its dusky colouring within the dimly-lighted aisle, and great was the effect on the devotions of the multitude. In places where Protestant truth has not shorn their superstition of its grosser outgrowths, the procession of the *Fete Dieu* is garnished with a huge goggle eye, carried aloft upon a pole, moved in its socket by strings and pulleys, and ticketed "The Omniscient." This becomes an object of great attraction in the crowd. In one aspect it is more childish than any child's play; but in another aspect a melancholy seriousness pervades it. This hideous mimicry of omniscience is an elaborate effort to weave a veil under which an unclean conscience may comfortably hide from the eye of God. After all the darkening and distorting effects of sin, there lies in the deep of a human soul an appetite for the knowledge of God, which, when it can do no more, stirs now and then, and troubles the man. It is the art of Antichrist to lie on the watch for that blind hunger when first it begins to stir, and throw into its

opening mouth heaps of swine-food husks, to gorge and lay it, lest it should seek and get the bread of life.

This is the grosser method, which grosser natures adopt to destroy within themselves the sense of divine omniscience. There is another way running off in an opposite direction,—more refined, indeed, but equally atheistic,—more manly, but not more godly, than the crowded Pantheon of ancient or modern Rome. This other road to rest is Pantheism. If there is speculation in an age, it becomes restive under the thick clay of image-worship. There is a spirit which will not endure a material idol, and yet is not the spirit of God. Dagon falls, and the philosophers make sport of his dishonoured stump. Instead of making a little ugly idol for themselves, they adopt a great and glorious one made to their hands. God, they say, is the soul of Nature; and Nature therefore is the only god whom they desire or need. Sea, earth, air,—flowers, trees, and living creatures, including man,—the creatures in the aggregate,—the universe is God. In this way they contrive to heal over the wound which the sense of an omniscient Eye makes in an unclean conscience. It is the personality of God that stings the flesh of the alienated. It is easier to deal with Nature in her majestic movements than with the Self of the Holy One. Nature heaves in the sea, and sighs in the wind, and blossoms in the flowers, and bleats on the pastures. Nature glides gently round in her gigantic orbit, and stoops not to notice the thoughts and words of a human being. He may live as he lists, although Nature is there. Philosophy compels him to reject the paltry, tangible, local gods of all the superstitions.

Reason constrains him to own the universality of the Creator's presence. The problem in his mind is, how to conceive of the Lord's eyes being in every place, and yet indifferent to sin. In order to accomplish this, the personal, with its pungency, must be discharged from the idea of God. This done, the great idol, though more sublime, is not a whit more troublesome than the little one. The creature, whether great or small, whether God's hand-work or man's, cannot be a god to an intelligent, immortal human soul. Neither the idolater's stock nor the philosopher's universe has an eye to follow a transgressor into those chambers where he commits his abominations in the dark; but in every place "our God is a consuming fire" upon a sin-stained conscience. The darkness and the light are both alike to him (Ps. cxxxix. 12).

"*In every place*" our hearts and lives are open in the sight of Him with whom we have to do. The proposition is absolutely universal. We must beware, however, lest that feature of the word which should make it powerful only render it to us indefinite and meaningless. Man's fickle mind treats universal truths that come from heaven as the eye treats the visible heaven itself. At a distance from the observer all around, the blue canopy seems to descend and lean upon the earth, but where he stands it is far above, out of his sight. It touches not him at all; and when he goes forward to the line where now it seems to touch other men, he finds it still far above, and the point which applies to this lower world is as distant as ever. Heavenly truth, like heaven, seems to touch all the world around, but not his own immediate sphere, or himself, its

centre. The grandest truths are practically lost in this way when they are left whole. We must rightly divide the word, and let the bits come into every crook of our own character. Besides the assent to general truth, there must be specific personal application. A man may own omniscience, and yet live without God in the world.

The house of prayer is one important place on earth, and the eyes of the Lord are there when the great congregation has assembled, and the solemn worship has begun. He seeth not as man seeth. Thoughts are visible to Him. Oh! what sights these pure eyes behold in that place! If our eyes could see them, a scream of surprise would rend the air. "Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth" (Ezek. viii. 12). Take your place beside a hive of bees in a summer day at noon, and watch the busy traffickers. The outward-bound brush quickly past the heavy-laden incomers in the narrow passage. They flow like two opposite streams of water in the same channel, without impeding each other's motions. Every one is in haste: none tarries for a neighbour. Such a hive is a human heart, and the swarm of winged thoughts which harbour there maintain an intercourse with all the world in constant circulation, while the man sits among the worshippers still, and upright, and steady, as a bee-hive upon its pedestal. The thoughts that issue from their home in that human heart, bold like robbers in the dark, overleap the fences of holiness, suck at will every flower that

they reckon sweet, and return to deposit their gatherings in the owner's cup. The eyes of the Lord are there, beholding the evil.

The family is His own work, and He does not desert it. His eyes are open there, to see how father and mother entwine authority and love, a twofold cord, at once to curb the children's waywardness and lead them in the paths of peace; how children obey their parents in the Lord; how a sister employs that gentleness whereby God has made woman great, to soothe and win the robuster brother; how a brother proffers the arm that the Almighty has made strong, a support for a mother or a sister in her weakness to lean upon; how masters become fathers to their servants, and servants lighten their labour by infusing into its dull heavy body the inspiring soul of love. In the family, the place where all these bonds unite, and all these relations circulate, are the eyes of the Lord its Maker: let all its members "walk as seeing Him who is invisible."

In the street, in the counting-house, in the shop, in the factory, these eyes ever are. God does not forget and forsake a man when he rises from his knees and plunges into business; the man, therefore, should not then and there forget and forsake God.

In the tavern, when its doors are shut and its table spread,—when the light is brilliant and the laugh loud,—when the cup circulates and the head swims,—in that place are the eyes of the Lord, and they are like a flame of fire. It would be a salutary though a painful experience, if the eyes of these time-killers were opened but for

a moment to meet the look of their omniscient Witness, before he become their almighty Judge.

But the eyes of the Lord are bent on this world, to behold the good as well as the evil that grows there. Is there any place among its thorns and thistles which bears fruit pleasant to the eyes of its Maker? Yes; there are fields which he cultivates (1 Cor. iii. 9), and trees which he plants (Isa. v. 3). On these places his eye rests with complacency, beholding the growth of his own grace. One of the places that attract the Redeemer's eye is a shady avenue where a youth saunters alone on a summer eve, communing with his own heart, grieving over its detected backslidings, and breathing a prayer for reconciliation and renewing. That angular recess in the ivy-covered rock, dark in daylight by the thickness of the leafy shade,—that is a place to which the Lord's eye turns intent; for thither, when the fire burned, the penitent turned aside unseen; and there he "wept and made supplication, and *prevailed*," nor parted from the place, nor let the Angel of the Covenant go, until he had gotten a whole Saviour for his soul, and surrendered his whole soul to the Saviour. This tree of righteousness is the planting of the Lord. By its freshness and fruitfulness he is glorified. The new creation is at least as lovely in the Creator's eye as the old one was before it was marred by sin. In that ransomed captive the Redeemer "shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied."

"Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more then the hearts of the children of men?" This terrible truth these hearts secretly know, and their despe-

rate writhings to shake it off show how much they dislike it. The Romish confessional is one of the most pregnant facts in the whole history of man. It is a monument and measure of the guilty creature's enmity against God. We know authoritatively from their own books what Rome expects her priests to do in the confessional, and history gives some glimpses of what they actually do. We have felt the glow of indignation in our breast as we learned how the confessor fastens like a horse-leech on his victim, and how the victim, like a charmed bird, abandons itself to the tyrant's will. We have heard how a full-aged unmarried man explores at will the half-formed thoughts that flutter in the bosom of a maid, and rudely rakes up the secrets that lie the deepest in the memory of a matron. We have wondered at the blindness and stupidity of our common nature, in permitting a man, not more holy than his neighbours, to stand in the place of God to a brother's soul. There is cause for grief, but not ground for surprise. The phenomenon proceeds in the way of natural law. It is the common, well understood process of compounding for the security of the whole, by the voluntary surrender of a part. The confessional is a kind of insurance office, where periodical exposure of the heart to a man is the premium paid for fancied impunity in hiding that heart altogether from the deeper scrutiny of the all-seeing God. Popish transgressors have no particular delight in confession for its own sake. Confession to the priest is felt and dreaded as an evil. The devout often need spurring to make them come. And when they come, it is on the principle

of submitting to the less evil in order to escape the greater.

The incoming of the Heart Searcher is feared and loathed, like a deadly and contagious disease. A quack comes up, and by dint of bold profession, persuades the trembler that voluntary inoculation with the same disease in a milder form will secure exemption from the terrible reality. The guilty, although he does not like to have his conscience searched,—*because* he does not like to have his conscience searched, submits to the searching of his conscience. The pretending penitent accepts the scrutiny by a man, in the hope of escaping thereby the scrutiny of God. The impudent empiric tells his patient that if he submit to inoculation, the small-pox will never come. Behold "the human nature of the question;" behold the philosophy of the confessional.

It is in principle the old question of the heathen,—"Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Mic. vi. 7.) It is not, however, the fruit of the body that is offered, for they do not make their children pass through the fire to Moloch now; the spiritual chastity of the soul is laid down as the price of impunity for sin. God made the human soul for himself. It is vilest prostitution to abandon it to the authoritative search of a sinful man. Yet this unnatural sacrifice is made, this galling yoke is worn, in the vain hope of shutting out the eyes of the Lord from one place of his own world.

But what fearful dilemma have we here? The Holiest changeth not when He comes a visitant to a human heart. He is the same there that he is in the highest

heaven. He cannot look upon sin; and how can a human heart welcome Him into its secret chambers? How can the blazing fire welcome in the quenching water? It is easy to commit to memory the seemly prayer of an ancient penitent, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts" (Ps. cxxxix. 23). The dead letters, worn smooth by frequent use, may drop freely from callous lips, leaving no sense of scalding on the conscience; and yet, truth of God though they are, they may be turned into a lie in the act of utterance. The prayer is not true, although it is borrowed from the Bible, if the suppliant invite the All-seeing in, and yet would give a thousand worlds, if he had them, to keep him out for ever.

Christ has declared the difficulty, and solved it: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John xiv. 6). When the Son has made a sinner free, he is free indeed. The dear child, pardoned and reconciled, loves and longs for the Father's presence. What! is there neither spot nor wrinkle now upon the man, that he dares to challenge inspection by the Omniscient, and to offer his heart as Jehovah's dwelling-place? He is not yet so pure; and well he knows it. The groan is bursting yet from his broken heart: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24.) Many stains defile him yet; but he loathes them now, and longs to be free. The difference between an unconverted and a converted man is not that the one has sins and the other has none; but that the one takes part with his cherished sins against

a dreaded God, and the other takes part with a reconciled God against his hated sins. He is out with his former friends, and in with his former adversary. Conversion is a turning, and it is one turning only, but it produces simultaneously and necessarily two distinct effects. Whereas his face was to his sins and his back to God, his face is now to God and his back toward his sins. This one turning, with its twofold result, is in Christ the Mediator, and through the work of the Spirit.

As long as God is my enemy, I am his. I have no more power to change that condition than the polished surface has to refrain from reflecting the sunlight that falls upon it. It is God's love, from the face of Jesus shining into my dark heart, that makes my heart open, and delight to be his dwelling-place. The eye of the just Avenger I cannot endure to be in this place of sin; but the eye of the compassionate Physician I shall gladly admit into this place of disease, for he came from heaven to earth that he might heal such sin-sick souls as mine. When a disciple desires to be searched by the living God, he does not thereby intimate that there are no sins in him to be discovered: he intimates rather that his foes are so many and so lively, that nothing can subdue them except the presence and power of God.

II.

A WHOLESOME TONGUE.

"A wholesome tongue is a tree of life."—xv. 4.

Not a *silent* tongue: mere abstinence from evil is not good. The beasts that perish speak no guile; what do ye more than they? The tongue of man is a talent given by God, and the commandment, "Occupy till I come," is deeply graven in its wondrous structure. He who hides his talent in the earth is counted wicked and slothful. The servant vainly pleads that it was not employed for evil: the Master righteously condemns because it was not employed for good. Idleness is evil under the administration of God.—Not a *smooth* tongue: it may be soft on the surface, while the poison of asps lies cherished underneath. "The mouth of a strange woman is smoother than oil." A serpent licks his victim all over before he swallows it. Smoothness is not an equivalent for truth. —Not a *voluble* tongue: that active member may labour much to little purpose. It may revolve with the rapidity and steadiness of manufacturing machinery, throwing off from morning till night a continuous web of wordage, and yet not add one grain to the stock of human wisdom by the imposing bulk of its weightless product.—Not a *sharp* tongue: some instruments are made keen-edged for the purpose of wounding. "There is that speaketh like the

piercings of a sword" (Prov. xii. 18). The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. A great apostle used sharpness, and so did his Lord before him; but unless we partake of their spirit, we cannot safely imitate their plan. He would need to have a loving heart and a steady hand who ventures to cut with a sharp tongue into the quick of a brother's nature.—Not even a *true* tongue: truth is the foundation of all good in speech, but it is the foundation only. Wanting truth, there is only evil; but even with it there may be little of good. Truth is necessary, but not enough. The true tongue must also be *wholesome*.

Before anything can be wholesome in its effects on others, it must be whole in itself. The tongue must be itself in health before it can diffuse a healthful influence around. But our tongue, as an instrument of moral agency, is diseased. It is in the human constitution the chief outgate from the heart, and the heart of the fallen is not in health. The scripture of the Old Testament quoted by Paul in the New, declares, with memorable pungency, that it is corrupt and corrupting: "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit" (Rom. iii. 13). Government, watching over the health of the nation, will not permit a grave to lie open. Because there is putridity in its heart, its mouth must be closed. The throat of a grave, if left open, would breathe forth pestilence. Alas! the moral disease is pouring out moral infection, and no government can stay the plague. Every corrupt heart is generating the poison, and every unwholesome tongue is a vent for

its escape. The air is tainted. Men both give out and draw in corruption like breath.

Parents who wisely love their children greatly dread unwholesome tongues. Sometimes they are in great straits as to the path of duty. They cannot take the young out of the world, and yet they are afraid to send them into it. When a father hears a torrent of polluting words from a foul tongue on the street, or in a public conveyance, and returns home to look upon his little boy, ignorant as yet of full-grown wickedness, he could almost wish that his child were deaf, and so shielded on one side from the great adversary's onset. If the wish were lawful, you would be inclined to say, Let his ear be open to the song of birds and the murmur of streams, to the rushing of the winds and the roll of the thunder; but let him not hear the voice of man until he hear it new in the kingdom of the Father—until it burst forth wholesome from the ranks of the redeemed round the throne, where they vie with the unfallen in praising the same Lord.

But this cannot be. We and our children are in the world, and the world teems with evil. In particular, it is like a lazar-house because of unwholesome tongues. Hear from the Apostle James a faithful description of the danger: "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James iii. 6, 8). One would think that parents, in view of such a pestilence abounding, would not be in haste to "bring out" their children at a tender age into the region of infection.

True love would rather shield them as long as possible from the inevitable contact, and in the meantime move heaven and earth to have the shield of faith interposed between the tender conscience of the child and the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Dogs licked the sores of Lazarus as he lay at the rich man's gate, and the poor cripple reaped a benefit from their kindness. The dumb brute has a wholesome tongue, and an instinct that prompts him to use it. Would that his master's tongue were as soft, and its touch as soothing! The best things, corrupted and misapplied, become the most mischievous. Our tongue is fearfully and wonderfully made! Great is its capacity for hurt or for healing. If it were attuned to the praise of God, it would be a medicine for the sufferings of men. If Christians were like Christ, they would be more happy and more useful. He spake as never man spake. When men had sunk helpless in a deadly disease, "He sent his word and healed them." For a wounded spirit there is no medicine like love-drops distilling from a wholesome tongue: even where they fail to heal the wound, they will soothe the sufferer, and so lighten his pain. A high place in the sight of God and man has the physician who remains on the battle-field after the conquering host has passed on, tending indiscriminately wounded friends and wounded foes; or who plies his task in a plague-stricken city, entering every house where a chalk-mark on the door indicates that the infection is within. His is an honourable work. Angels, eyeing him as they pass, might envy him the work which he has got in the service of the common

Lord. But every one of us might attain a rank as high, and do a work as beneficent. If broken limbs lie not in our way, broken spirits abound in our neighbourhood. Sick hearts are rife on the edges of our daily walk. Although we lack the skill necessary to cure a bodily ailment, we may all exercise the art of healing on diseases that are more deeply set. A loving heart and a wholesome tongue are a sufficient apparatus; and the instincts of a renewed nature should be ever ready to apply them in the time and place of need.

The tongue, when it is whole and wholesome, "is a tree of life." In a former chapter (x. 11) the similitude employed was a well; but whether the manner of the diffusion be like a well sending forth its streams, or like a tree scattering its ripened fruit, the influence diffused from a good man is "life." The product which issues by the tongue from a renewed heart is healthful in its character, and it spreads as seed spreads in autumn from the plant on which it grew. "Winged words" have fluttered about in poetry and prose through all the languages of the civilized world from old Homer's day till now. The permanence and prevalence of the expression prove that it embodies a recognised truth. Words have wings indeed, but they are the wings of seeds rather than of birds or butterflies. We are all accustomed to observe in autumn multitudes of diminutive seeds, each balanced on its own tiny wing, floating past on the breeze. Some of these have fallen from useful plants, and some from hurtful weeds; but the impartial wind bears the good and the evil alike forward to their destiny. Some plants

are prolific almost beyond the reach of arithmetic or of imagination. These countless multitudes are scattered indiscriminately over all the land. Words are like these seeds, in their varied character, their measureless multitude, and their winged speed. They drop off in inconceivable numbers: they fly far: they are widely spread. It is of deep importance that they should in their nature be good, and not evil. The tongue is a prolific tree; it concerns the whole community that it should be a tree of life, and not of death. Considering the influence of our words on the world, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!

In modern times the art of printing has given wings to human words in a measure that seems to vie even with the fecundity of nature. The quantity thus carried is such as to baffle all our powers of description or conception. But in the department of art, as in that of nature, there is great variety in the character of the seed, and a terrible impartiality in the law of diffusion. When the evil seed is permitted to grow, the wings are at hand to carry it across the world. It is the part of those who love their kind, and desire to see this sin-cursed earth become a paradise again, to keep down the growth of noxious seed, and cultivate the better kinds. The quantity of vain and hurtful words that are flying across the world on printed pages is enough to make us tremble for the coming generation. But to stand and tremble in presence of the danger is neither useful nor manful. When we hear of unwholesome words being sent week

after week by the ton-weight to the principal reservoirs in the large cities, and thence by various channels distributed over all the land, we should indeed be aroused to take the measure of the crisis, but not lose heart or hand at the discovery of its magnitude. Christians should take heart and hope. We have words and wings for them as well as those who are against us. We have precious seed in our hands, and a world to spread it on. Our Father in heaven expects us to labour on his field. We have a good Master and pleasant work. In the labour of laying the words on these pages we are cheered by the thought that we are in the very act of attaching wings to the living seed of saving truth, that it may be cast on the winds at a venture, and borne way, under the direction of an all-wise Providence, to some needy, desert place. As we frame these sentences, we are like a humble artisan in his work-shop, fashioning wings for the word of righteousness. We are encouraged to pray, as they pass from our hands, that on these wings that word may be borne far beyond our sight, and that it may drop, in Indian jungle, or Australian mine, or American backwood, on some lone exile, and find entrance into the weary broken heart which at home in prosperity had been always hard and closed.

Ye who love the Lord and the brethren, wing the seed and give it to the wind. It is God's gift, and is in his keeping. When it goes out of your sight, plead with Him who employs the winds as his angels to guide it to some bare but broken ground. While you pray for the fruitfulness of what has already been scattered, work to

scatter more. This or that may prosper; perhaps this and that too. The very mountain tops shall wave yet like Lebanon with a harvest from the seed of "wholesome words." The earth shall yet be full of the knowledge of the Lord. The sowers may well wipe their tears away as they go forth, for they shall one day return rejoicing, "bringing their sheaves with them." The Lord gave the word,—the Lord is the Word; great should be the company of them that publish it (Ps. lxviii). After all, the shortest and surest method of killing and casting out the mischievous weeds that infest a field, is to get the field covered from side to side with a closely growing crop of precious grain. Wholesome words are the true antidote to the unwholesome. When the enemy sows tares, Christ's servants have only one way of effectually counter-working him, and that is by sowing wheat. The best way of eradicating error is to publish and practise truth.

III.

MIRTH A MEDICINE.

"A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."—xv. 13.

"Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad."—xii. 25.

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."—xvii. 22.

THE emotions that thrill in the heart mark themselves in legible lines on the countenance. This is a feature in the constitution of man, and a useful feature it is. The wisdom of our Maker may be seen in the degree of its development. If there had been more of it or less, the processes of human life could not have gone on so well. If the hopes and fears that alternate in the soul were as completely hidden from the view of an observer as the action of the vital organs within the body, the intercourse between man and man would be far less kindly than it now is. How blank would the aspect of the world be if no image of a man's thought could ever be seen glancing in his countenance! Our walk through life would be like a solitary march through a gallery of statues,—as cold as marble, and not nearly so beautiful. On the other hand, if all the meaning of the soul could be read in the countenance, the inconvenience would be so great as to bring the machinery of life almost to a stand still. Society could not go on if either all the mind's thoughts

or none were legible on the countenance. That medium which actually exists in the present constitution of humanity is obviously the best. You have some power of concealing your emotions, and your neighbour has some power of observing them. He who made us has done all things well.

Great purposes in providence are served by this arrangement. If the veil which hangs between the outer world and our hearts' emotions were altogether opaque, we would be too much isolated from our neighbours: if it were perfectly translucent, we would be too much in their power. The soul within is a burning light, sometimes bright and sometimes lurid: the countenance is a semi-transparent shade, through which the cast and colouring of the inner thought can be seen, but not its articulate details. A happy heart beaming through a guileless countenance is the best style of beauty. It is pleasant to look upon in the spring-time, and does not wither in the winter of age.

But joy in the heart can do more than make the aspect winsome. Besides enlivening a dull countenance, it heals a diseased nature. It "doeth good like a medicine;" whereas its opposite, "a broken spirit, drieth the bones." All who have watched the experience of themselves and their neighbours will acknowledge this in all its breadth as a practical truth. I know nothing equal to cheerful and even mirthful conversation for restoring the tone of mind and body when both have been overdone. Some great and good men, on whom very heavy cares and toils have been laid, manifest a constitutional tendency to relax

into mirth when their work is over. Narrow minds denounce the incongruity: large hearts own God's goodness in the fact, and rejoice in the wise provision made for prolonging useful lives. Mirth, after exhaustive toil, is one of nature's instinctive efforts to heal the part which has been racked or bruised. You cannot too sternly reprobate a frivolous life; but if the life be earnest for God and man, with here and there a layer of mirthfulness protruding, a soft bedding to receive heavy cares which otherwise would crush the spirit, to snarl against spurts of mirth may be the easy and useless occupation of a small man, who cannot take in at one view the whole circumference of a larger one.

But it is as medicine, and not as food, that mirth is useful to man. As well might the wild ass live and fatten by snuffing up the north wind, as a man's character become solid if merriment is its chief or only aliment. To live on it as daily bread, will produce a hollow heart and a useless history. But that which is worthless as food may be precious as medicine. Administered in proper quantities and at proper times, it will make the staple of solid seriousness more productive of actual good.

Even a dull observer may see wisdom and goodness in the habitual cheerfulness of the young. There is a time to laugh, and childhood is eminently that time. A sad, sombre spirit in a child, is both the effect and the cause of disease. Mirth in large quantities is needful as a medicine for the ailments of childhood, and our Maker has placed an abundant supply of it in their nature, with a tendency to draw it day by day for use.

But some persons and some classes are all too ready to acknowledge the virtue of mirth as a medicine. There are quacks who take it up and vaunt its universal efficacy. In ignorance or bad faith they apply it in cases where it may kill, but cannot cure. Recognising the law that a broken spirit drieth the bones, these practitioners, when conviction of sin burns like fire in the patient's conscience, would deliberately pour in a stream of mirth to quench it. With equal zeal they prescribe the same medicine as a preventive, lest the wasting body should be still more enfeebled by an inroad of seriousness upon the soul. They will quietly push a novel beneath the pillow on which the too beauteous cheek of consumption lies. They will search the sick-room round, and carry off bodily *The Saints' Rest*, or *A Call to the Unconverted*, lest these books should arouse a slumbering soul, and so shake too roughly its frail tenement. In their own way they adapt and apply the maxim, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine."

It is true that to maintain the patient's cheerfulness hastens the patient's cure. A bright hope within will sometimes do more to restore the wasted strength than all the prescriptions of the physician. A light heart, we acknowledge, is itself a potent medicine, and lends effectual aid in co-operation with other cures. If the restoration of the body's health were our only care, we would not examine scrupulously either the kind or the quantity of joyfulness that friends might infuse into a fainting heart. But while the healing of the body is a great thing, a greater lies beside it. For the chance of con-

tributing to a corporeal cure, I would not cheat an immortal soul, as it fluttered on the verge of eternity. Is it true—yea or nay—that before death mercy is offered, and after it judgment is fixed? Is it true that Christ is the way to eternal life, and that there is no other? If it is, to divert a human soul from looking unto Jesus when the last sands of life are running, is the unkindest act which man can do to man. If you were Atheists and Materialists,—if you believed in no God and no hereafter,—there would be at least a melancholy consistency in occupying life's last hours with trifles, that the spirit, burdened with a decaying body, should have no other weight to bear; but it is both cruel and stupid for those who bear Christ's name to blindfold, at the very exodus of life, a brother's soul, in order to catch a chance of temporary benefit to his body.

Nor is this all. This effort to banish care does not always succeed. Through all these coverings the terrors of the Lord may burst in, and agitate the soul all the more fiercely, that you have tried so long to keep them out. When bodily pains or convictions of conscience rise to the full, your frivolous pleasures are driven away like smoke before the wind. A merry heart is a medicine for his ailment! Granted; but who shall give him a merry heart? Who shall give the guilty a merry heart when God is drawing near to judgment, and sin is lying heavy on his soul? If you could introduce the peace of God which passeth all understanding, it would keep his heart and mind; but no inferior consolation can meet thy case. Will any one dare to say that in nature's extremity

those who neglect Christ are happier at heart than those who trust in his love?

When a human heart is stooping and breaking beneath the heavy load of suffering and sin, "a good word maketh it glad." But if the man is dying, to assure him he will soon be better, is not a good word. If the man is in sin and under condemnation, to assure him his sins are trivial and his Judge indulgent, is not a good word. A good word will gladden the grieved heart, but where shall it be found? Hark! the Man of Sorrows lets it drop like dew from his own lips—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John xiv. 27). Happy are they who have such a comforter in the time of need. David, like Abraham, saw his Lord's day afar off, and was glad. The presence of his Redeemer kindled a gladness in his heart which took the torment out of even dying pains: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Ps. xxiii.)

True Christians have two advantages over the men of the world: they are happier now, and safer at last. There is more gladness put by a gracious God in a believing heart, than all that the worldly know even when their corn and wine abound the most. It would be a great attainment for themselves, and a great means of good to others, if the disciples of Christ in our day could let the hope which cheers their hearts also shine in their faces. If the joy of the Lord, which really is a Christian's strength within, should sit habitually as a beauty

on his countenance, his talent would be better occupied now, and his entrance more abundant at the last. When Stephen's short but quick career was coming to a close,—when the seventy elders had taken their places on the judgment-seat, full of enmity against the name of Jesus, —when the baser sort of the persecutors, at the instigation of their leaders, had dragged him violently into the council-hall,—when perjured witnesses, taking their cue from the keen and cruel eye of Saul, declared in concert that he was a habitual blasphemer of holy things,—when the meek martyr saw and felt from many signs that through a boisterous passage he must quickly go to another judgment,—his heart did not lose its hopefulness, and his countenance did not fall. At that moment, when the crisis of his fate had come, the joy that played about his heart shone through: "All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Perhaps that heaven-like brightness held some of the spectators, and would not let them go until it led them into the arms of Stephen's Saviour. We have known a case in which the gleam of joy on a departing disciple's face feathered the arrow of divine truth, and sent it home with saving power to a heart that had hitherto kept its iron point at bay. If Christians could get living hope lighted within, and let it beam like sun-light all the day through an open countenance, their lives would be more legible as epistles of Christ, and more effectual to win souls.

IV.

TASTES DIFFER.

"The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom."—xv. 14, 21.

"It is joy to the just to do judgment."—xxi. 15.

TASTES differ widely, and so therefore do enjoyments. Water is the element of one creature, and air the element of another. The same material is to this poison, and to that food. Each species differs in nature from all others, and nature will have her own way.

Among men, viewed in their spiritual relations, there is a similar variety of tastes and pleasures. There is first the grand generic difference between the old man and the new. The change of nature is radical, and the change of appetite consequently complete. "What things were gain to me, these I count loss." So true was the observation of the heathen as to the effect of the gospel preached by the apostles. The world to Saul of Tarsus was turned upside down, from the moment that he met the Lord in the way, and as a lost sinner accepted pardon through the blood of the cross. After that moment his tastes were not only changed; they were absolutely reversed. What he had formerly chased as gain, he now loathed as loss. He was a converted man; that is, a man turned round, and his whole life rushing the other way.

Besides the first and chief distinction between the dead and the living, many subordinate varieties appear, shading imperceptibly away into each other, according as good or evil preponderates in the character. The best way to know a man is to observe what gives him pleasure. A good man may once or many times be betrayed into foolish words or deeds, but the indulgence makes him miserable. Folly, like Ezekiel's roll, was sweet in his mouth, but left a lasting bitterness behind. Fools feed on foolishness; it is pleasant to their taste at the time, and they ruminate with relish on it afterwards. The heart's joy in any act of the life, supplies a surer test of character than the act itself. Two persons of opposite spiritual tastes may be detected for once in the same act of evil; but they do not walk abreast in the same life-course. Sin becomes bitter to the taste of the renewed, and he puts it away with loathing; but the corrupt, who has never known a change, counts the morsel sweet, and continues to roll it under his tongue. Two young men, of nearly equal age, and both the sons of God-fearing parents, were seen to enter together a theatre at a late hour in a large city. They sat together, and looked and listened with equal attention. The one was enjoying the spectacle and the mirth; the other was silently enduring an unspeakable wretchedness. The name of God and the hopes of the godly were employed there to season the otherwise vapid mirth of the hollow-hearted crowd. One youth, through the Saviour's sovereign grace, had, in a distant solitude, acquired other tastes. The profanity of the play rasped rudely against them. He felt as if the words of the

actors and the answering laugh of the spectators were tearing his flesh. He breathed freely when, with the retiring crowd, he reached the street again. It was his first experience of a theatre, and his last. It is a precious thing to get from the Lord, as Paul got, a new relish and a new estimate of things. This appetite for other joys, if exercised and kept keen, goes far to save you from defilement, even when suddenly and occasionally brought into contact with evil; as certain kinds of leaves refuse to be wet, and though plunged into water come out of it dry.

The gratification of appetite is pleasant. This law of nature bears witness that God is good. Food and drink are necessary to the maintenance of life. If, as a general rule, the act of taking them were painful, the duty would be neglected, and the race would become extinct. The Author of our being has made the performance sure by making it delightful. The pain of hunger is an officer of the executive under the supreme government of Heaven, ever on the watch, compelling living creatures to give the body its necessary support. This beneficent law, like all the other good things of God, is perverted by the fallen. This truth of God is profanely turned into a lie by the corrupt appetites of men. Appetite, and the pleasure of indulging it, is still a great force when it is turned in the wrong direction. That which among God's works is mighty to save life, is in Satan's hand mighty to destroy it. When the taste is depraved, the pleasantness of the poison supplies a power like gravitation, silently dragging down the slave with ever-increasing speed into the

bottomless pit. If folly were not joy to the fool, he might soon be induced to forsake it. Nothing will produce a new life but a new nature.

The soul has an appetite, and needs food as well as the body. In this department too the tastes are various, and there is a corresponding variety in the provided supply. Fools feed on foolishness, and like it. They have no relish for more solid food. On the other hand, "it is joy to the just to do judgment." The Just One relished the doing of the Father's will as his meat and drink. Christians grow like Christ. Those who hope in his mercy learn to fall in with his tastes. If we saw a hungry human being turning away from the finest of the wheat, and by choice satisfying himself with the husks that swine do eat, we would shudder in presence of the prodigy; we would weep over the low estate into which one of our kind had fallen. Such a perversion of the bodily appetite is rare—perhaps altogether unknown: but a greater derangement of the spiritual taste is not only possible in certain cases; it is the common condition of men.

It is sad to think how men run to what they like, with as little forethought and as great impetuosity as swollen rivers rush towards the sea. In the main the taste of the renewed leads them to the food which will sustain and invigorate the health of the soul; but even they need to watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation. He will not be a thriving, growing Christian, who partakes freely of joys as they come, on the right hand and on the left. Even a healthful man, if he is

wise, will observe carefully the nature of his food, and watch the effects of each kind. If he discovers that any species, though pleasant at the time, hurts his health afterwards, he will carefully abstain from the tempting morsel. You may prove to him that it is not poison,—that it will not take away his life: that is not enough: if it is hurtful to his health, he will abandon it. Alas! the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. Men who, on the whole, value their spiritual life the most, lightly expose its health to injuries against which they would resolutely defend their bodies. If a man should eat unwholesome food from day to day, the mischief would soon become palpable both to himself and his neighbours. He would feel his own feebleness, and others would stare at him as a walking skeleton. But when the spiritual life is exposed to the action of a slow poison, the emaciation of the soul is a thing not so easily felt by the patient, and not so easily seen by his neighbours. It is written of Ephraim in a time of spiritual decay, "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not" (Hos. vii. 9). Ah! if the soul's health and sickness were visible like those of the body, the old question, "Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day?" would be appropriately addressed now to many of the royal family of heaven. The answer, if truly given, would in most cases be, They feed too much on foolishness, and do not satisfy themselves with that which was meat and drink to their Master in the days of his flesh.

In dealing with men for their reformation, they who

do not begin at the beginning lose all their labour. If you assume that human nature is already good, and only needs to be helped forward to higher degrees of virtue, you miss the mark, and gain nothing. You are fishing with a bait for which the fishes have no taste. They do not like it, and will not take it. The corrupt are not naturally alarmed at their own corruption, and eager to leap into holiness.

You may have seen living, moving things, in the rankest material corruption, and shuddered to think that life of any kind should be imprisoned in such a horrid place. The instinct of compassion for wretchedness is stirred within you; but a second thought lays it to rest again. These worms do not loathe that which is at once their dwelling and their food. It is their nature: it is their life to be there. These worms, to your taste so loathsome, are not ashamed of their condition, and have no desire to leave it. Although an opportunity is offered, they do not hasten to escape into cleanness, and wipe themselves from their filth. Such is moral corruption and the life therein, if it is left to itself. The tenants of the mire do not grow ashamed, or weary of it. They have been bred in it, and it is their delight. Sinners are not, of their own motion, weary and ashamed of sin. They do not desire to escape out of it. Although all intelligent beings, who are not themselves in the mire, look on with inexpressible disgust, whether they be the angels who never fell, or the saints who have been lifted up, those who are, and have always been in it, love their condition, and would not leave it. If in compassion for

living creatures crawling in material filth, you should benevolently pick them out one by one, and lay them in clean dry beds, you would become their tormentor by taking them out of their element. Such, to the spiritually impure, God's word and messengers are felt to be. The unclean do not hail them as deliverers. This is the most fearful feature of our case. It is not like that of a man who has fallen into the water, and instantly struggles to escape with all the energy of his being. Sin is the element of the sinful. The cure is not another place, but a new nature.

Mahomet manifested great shrewdness in the conception of his paradise. If he mistook the kingdom of God, he comprehended well the appetites of men. He promises his followers as a heaven the fullest gratification of all their desires. But what if a foundation of eternal truth be found lying beneath all these abominations! The prophet's followers have a right principle in their hands, although, by turning it upside down, they make it the most destructive of errors. It is true that heaven will give unbridled scope to all the appetites of all its inmates. There will be no crucifying of the flesh there. No man will have his taste thwarted, or his supply stinted there. Mahomet is right, in so far as he says that in heaven every entrant will have all his passions gratified to the full. The difference lies in this: they expect that heaven's joys will be made to suit human appetites; we know that the tastes of the saved will be purified into perfect conformity with the joys that are at God's right hand for evermore. In heaven, indeed, there is no

foolishness to feed upon; but there are no fools to desire it. Heaven denies no pleasure, and yet provides nothing impure. All the evil desires are left behind, and all the good are gratified.

It is time that we who seek that better country should be forgetting past attainments, and reaching forth after newer and higher measures of holiness: "Grow in grace." The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Be ye also ready. There will be no crucifying of the flesh in heaven! but that is because there will be no flesh to crucify. It must be crucified now. The old man must be put off with his deeds and his desires; and for this salvation work, "now is the appointed time." Those who do not on this side of life's boundary-line acquire a taste for holiness, will not on the other side get an entrance into heaven. "To them that look for Him, He shall appear:" they who look now in the opposite direction shall not then behold His face in peace.

V.

HUMILITY BEFORE HONOUR.

"Before honour is humility."—xv. 33.
"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."—xvi. 18.
"A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."—xxix. 23.

"If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. ii. 5). There is only one way of reaching honour, and the candidates who do not keep that way will fail. You must go to honour through humility. This is the law—the law of God. It cannot be changed. It has its analogies in the material creation. Every height has its corresponding depth. As far as the Andes pierce upward into the sky, so far do the valleys of the Pacific at their base go down into the heart of the earth. If the branches of a tree rise high in the air, its roots must penetrate to a corresponding depth in the ground; and the necessity is reciprocal. The higher the branches are, the deeper go the roots; and the deeper the roots are, the higher go the branches.

This law pervades the moral administration as well as the material works of God. The child Jesus is set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel: but it is first the fall and then the rising; for "before honour is humility." Fall they must at the feet of the Crucified, before they can rise and reign as the children of the great King. No cross, no crown. "Blessed are the poor in

spirit, for theirs is the kingdom." What are these, and whence came they,—they are in honour now, whatever their origin may have been,—these that stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, (Rev. vii.) Like Joshua the high priest (Zech. iii.), they were clothed with filthy garments, before they obtained that glorious change. If the unhappy guest at the King's table (Matt. xxii.) had gone first through the valley of humiliation, he would not have been cast at last into outer darkness; if he had owned his own garment worthless, he would have gotten a fit one, free, and not have been speechless at the incoming of the King. "Before honour is humility:" this is the organic law of the kingdom of heaven. The King is far from the proud, but dwells with him that is humble and of a contrite heart.

There are two mountains in the land of Israel, equal in height, and standing near each other, with a deep narrow valley between. At an interesting point in the people's history, one of these mountains bore the curse, and the other received the blessing (Deut. xi. 26-29). If you had stood then on Ebal, where the curse was lying, you could not have escaped to Gerizim to enjoy the blessing without going down to the bottom of the intervening gorge. There was a way for the pilgrim from the curse to the blessing, if he were willing to pass through the valley of humiliation: but there was no flight through the air, so as to escape the going down.

These things are an allegory. All men are at first in their own judgments on a lofty place, but the curse hangs over the mountain of their pride. Nature's hopes are high, but there is wrath from the Lord upon them, because they dishonour his law by expecting that it will accept sin for righteousness. All the saved are also on a mountain height, but God the Lord dwells among them, and great is the peace of his children. All who have reached this mountain have been in the deep. They sowed in tears before they went forth rejoicing, to bear home the sheaves.

Paul was high at first in nature's pride: "I was alive without the law once." But the commandment came, like a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, and its instant effect was to cast him down to the ground: "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." He felt that he was altogether vile; he saw that he was lost. When he had been so brought low in conviction of sin, he was raised again in the hope of mercy. It was necessary that he should be brought down, but it was also necessary that he should rise again. Fear is the way to trust, but fear is not trust. You must, indeed, come down from the mountain that is capped with the curse; but you must then ascend the mountain where Jesus, transfigured and radiant with the glory of grace, makes his ravished disciples feel it is good to be there, and desire to dwell for ever in the light of his countenance. It is not the going down that will make you safe and happy. It is not the putting off, but the putting on, that saves; and the preciousness of putting off

the old man lies in this,—that it is the only way of putting on Christ. Before honour is humility; but after humility is honour. If our hearts are truly humbled, God has pledged himself to exalt us in due season. In proportion as we attain the contrite heart, we may count on his gracious indwelling. If we are led by the Spirit of the Lord down into humility, we may be assured the next thing is honour; as we confidently anticipate that the day will follow the night. The broken heart is the Lord's chosen dwelling-place. When David was in the depth (Ps. cxxx.), he waited for the Lord: how? As those who are exposed to danger in night's darkness wait for the morning,—keenly feeling the want of it, but confidently counting that it will come. The Lord loves to be so looked for: to them that look for him he will come, and his coming will be like the morning. This humility —this honour have all the saints.

It is a part of the same divine law that "a man's pride shall bring him low." That which brings a creature farthest down is his own rebellious effort to exalt himself. It is with spirit as with matter,—the farther it shoots upward from its own proper sphere into the heavens above, the deeper will it sink down, and the more will it be broken by its fall. That law operated on spirit, as the law of gravitation acted on matter, before man was made. Among the angels that excel in strength, there was a leap of pride in order to exalt itself, and a consequent fall into the lowest depths of the pit. When these morning stars fell from the very height of heaven, they fell into a deep from which even the power of God pro-

vides no rising. In the same way man fell. It was a leap upward that brought us down so low. It was the proud effort to be as gods that brought man down to the companionship of devils. Under this eternal law the Papacy now lies. It cannot glide gently down from its presumptuous height, and so save itself from destruction. It has flown too high for falling softly. It is fixed, and that by an unchanging law, that it cannot be reformed, and must be destroyed.

This law will crush every one of us if we cross its path. Like the other laws of God, it touches the smallest, while it controls the greatest. An atom obeys the same impulses that guide a world. Oh, how jealously should a man watch the swellings of pride in his own breast! How eagerly should each desire to have his own pride purged wholly out! Pride remaining in us will bring us down, though we were in the highest heaven. When two things are weighed in the opposite ends of a balance, who can make both simultaneously descend? The crushing of the proud is but the other side of the exaltation of the lowly. Either pride must be cast out of me, or I must be cast out from the company of the blessed.

The seventy-third Psalm, like the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is a specimen of spiritual autobiography. Cut out, at the crisis, a section from that self-history of a soul: "So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Extremes meet here. The lowest and the

highest touch each other. Within the compass of a few lines, recording one man's experience, we find a humility which depresses him beneath the level of man, and an honour which admits him into the presence of God. One moment the penitent feels himself to be brutish; another, his glad forgiven spirit rises buoyant toward the throne like a flame of fire, or a ministering angel. These are the footsteps of the flock. It concerns us to know that we are on the same track; for none other conducts to safety. It is when a man is so purged of pride as to count himself like a "beast," that he is best prepared for the company of a justifying God, and the spirits of just men made perfect. They who thus put off their own righteousness as filthy rags, are ready to put on Christ; and in Him they are counted worthy. Paul kept close on the track of the Psalmist: in one verse it is, "O wretched man that I am!" in the next, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vii. 24, 25). If we get down into the "humility" through which these ancient disciples passed, we shall share the "honour" to which they have been raised.

VI.

THE MAKER AND THE BREAKER OF A FAMILY'S PEACE.

"Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house."—xv. 16, 17, 27.

"Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife."—xvii. 1.

THESE are blessed words in a world of strife. They are welcome as a well of water springing in the desert. They drop on weary hearts like rain on the mown grass. The gift is good. We receive it with gladness, and thank the Giver.

The constitution of man and the law of God are fitted into each other, like lock and key. The capability of the subject corresponds to the rule which the Sovereign enacts. When the creature falls in with the Creator's will, all the machinery moves smoothly: when the creature resists, it stands still or is riven asunder. Truth sweetens the relations of life; falsehood eats like rust into their core. When they live in love, men meet each other softly and kindly, as the eyelids meet. Envy casts grains of sand between the two, and under each. Every movement then sends a shooting pain through all the body, and makes the salt tears flow. So good are peace and love for human

kind, that with them a family will be happy though they have nothing else in the world; and without them miserable, although they have the whole world at their command.

No creature can with impunity break any of the Creator's laws. He is not a man, that he should fail to detect or punish the transgressor. He depends not on the activity of police, or the speed of the telegraph. Sin follows the sinner, and finds him out, and inflicts the punishment. Sorrow comes on the heels of sin, as the echo answers to a sound, as the rebound answers to a blow. Let a family have abundant wealth, and all the luxuries that wealth can buy,—a commodious house and a sumptuous table, broad lands and a troop of attendants,—yet if strife enters the circle, it will act like leaven in the mass, and imbitter all their enjoyments. Being under law to God they cannot escape. When they sin they suffer. Strife makes them more miserable amidst all their wealth than a loving family who have not wherewith to buy to-morrow's food.

A dinner of herbs and a stalled ox indicate the two extremes,—humble poverty on the one side, and pampered luxury on the other. These brief expressions open for a moment the doors of the cottage and of the palace that we may obtain a glimpse of what is going on within. Look into the dwelling on this side: it is dinner time: the family, fresh from their labour, are seated round a clean uncovered table; there is no meat from the stall or the flock, no bunch of ripe grapes from the vine-yard, and even no bread from the corn-field. Some green herbs

gathered in the garden have been cooked and set down as the meal of the household. The fare is poor; but this poor fare and love together make a more savoury mess than any that ever graced a royal banquet. The people thrive upon the precious mixture. Look into the lofty castle on the other side at the moment when this word throws open its doors. A rich feast is reeking in the hall. The stalled ox is there, surrounded by a labyrinth of kindred luxuries. A crowd of attendants must be in the room, observing every look, and hearing every whisper. The poor man's family dine in private; the rich man's in public. This is one point in favour of the poor. The servant at his master's back is a man with human feelings in his breast. If he has been treated unkindly, anger rankles in his heart, while the smile that is paid for plays upon his countenance. If, moreover, there be jealousy between husband and wife, rivalry between brother and brother, in this great house, their meeting at a meal is misery; their politeness before strangers is the encrusted whitewash on a sepulchre's side, cracking and falling off at every movement, and revealing the rottenness within. When love leaves the family circle, it is no longer a piece of God's own hand-work, and there is no security for safety in any of its motions. Love is the element in which all its relations were set, for softness and safety; and when it has evaporated, nothing remains but that each member of the house should be occupied in mounting a miserable guard over his own interests, and against the anticipated contact of the rest. In that dislocated house each dreads all, and all dread each. The only distinction remain-

ing is, that the one who is nearest you hurts you the most.

But mark well, it is neither said in the Bible nor found in experience that they are all happy families who dine on herbs, and all unhappy who can afford to feast on a stalled ox. Some rich families live in love, and doubly enjoy their abundance; some poor families quarrel over their herbs. Riches cannot secure happiness, and poverty cannot destroy it. But such is the power of love, that with it, you will be happy in the meanest estate; without it, miserable in the highest. Would you know the beginning, and the middle, and the end of this matter,—the spring on high, the stream flowing through the channel of the covenant, and the fruitful outspread in a disciple's life below,—they are all here, and all one—Charity: "GOD IS LOVE;" "*Love is of God;*" "Walk in love."

In this book the greed of gain stands side by side with strife, as the twin troubler of a house. As a husbandman looks on a prevailing weed that infests his garden; as a shepherd looks on a wolf that ravages his flock, so our Father in heaven looks on that love of money which grievously mars the harmony of his own institute, the family. That instrument of torture points both ways. The miser, as we know by his name, is a torment to himself: he is also a thorn in the flesh of those who are nearest to him. Perhaps in our community, and in our day, more families are troubled by a lavish expenditure, than by an undue hoarding of money; but the prevalence of one evil does not make another evil good. Dealing with one thing at a time, the words give out a certain sound,—that if a

man be himself a miser, he makes his house miserable. When God has given a man one of his choicest blessings' a family; and given him, too, means sufficient for their support; if the man intercept the flow of the Creator's bounty, and hoard that which was given for use, he displeases the Giver, and injures the gift, as surely as if he should impiously arrest the flow of the blood from its central reservoir, and prevent it from circulating through the frame. The hoarded blood would clot and stagnate and corrupt; while the body, for want of it, would pine away. The benefit of its circulation would be lost, and its accumulation in one place would become an encumbrance dangerous to life. Thus the man troubles his house who diverts the children's daily portion into the miser's corrupting hoard.

In my earliest years, as far back on the line of life as memory's vision can distinctly reach, the nearest neighbour of our house on the right, was an old farmer, very religious and very rich. He had three sons and seven daughters. Instead of employing the increase of his fields to elevate the condition and enlarge the minds of his numerous, winsome, and well-conditioned family, he left them to nature, and laid up his money in the bank. The sons and daughters all married in succession, and left him. Thereafter, at the age of seventy-three, he married a servant-girl of exactly the same age as his youngest daughter. The match supplied the young people of the district with merriment for many months. The young woman wrought upon the old man's failing faculties, and in order to secure the money for herself, persuaded him

that all his children were banded in a conspiracy against his life. He made his will under this impression, bequeathing the bulk of his fortune to his wife; and, with a refinement of cruelty which was certainly not his own invention, devised small sums to each of his sons and daughters,—to one five pounds, to another ten, to each a different amount, reaching at the highest the sum of twenty-five pounds. The sums were made to vary with the varying shades of the children's guilt, as they were marked on the imagination of the imbecile parent. The old man died. The widow enjoyed her legacy unchallenged. But the daughters who had got the smaller sums went to law with their sisters who had obtained the larger sums, in order to have them equalized. After these miserable pittances had served to rend a whole family asunder in hopeless feuds, the worthless money itself was lost in law. The God of providence taught me early, as they teach children now in schools, by a picture, that "he who is greedy of gain troubleth his own house."

But the teaching was still more specific and guarded and fatherly than this. At the same time the other lesson was exhibited with equal vividness on the other side. Our nearest neighbour on the left—in this case half a mile distant, and in the former case a quarter—was another old man, very religious and very drunken. He had a light rent, a long lease, and an indulgent landlord. Plenty of money passed through his hands, but none ever remained in them. He was not greedy of gain, and yet he troubled his own house. His spendthrift and intemperate life aggravated by his religious profession,

told with fearful effect upon a band of stately and intelligent sons. They were all clever, but all made shipwreck.

At this advanced period of my life I think still with interest and awe on the sovereign providence that placed me, while yet a child, in that middle space between two evils, opposite, yet equal, and in full sight of both. The lessons were given not in the thin profile of a single line, but in the full breadth and varied features of large family groups. The examples did not glance into sight and out again like visions of the night: they remained in view for a long series of years. I saw the beginning, and I have lived to witness the end. In my childhood they were sowing the seed beside me, and in manhood I saw them reaping in tears. When God gave the law to Moses, it was accompanied by the precise and significant intimation, "I have written that thou mayest teach." The same Lord continues writing still on the fleshy tables of human hearts, and on the same condition—that the lesson so engraved should not be a talent hid in a napkin, but published for the benefit of all whom it may concern. These lines, written by the Lord's own hand in the workings of providence, lie in sharpest outline in the lower strata of my memory, and are fixed like fossils in the rock: the tide of city life rushing over them during many successive years, instead of defacing the letters, seems only to make the matrix more transparent, and so bring the characters more clearly out. The possession of these manuscripts I recognise as the obligation to exhibit them.

The man who lavishly spent his money, troubled his

own house; so also did the man who greedily hoarded it. Between these two extremes the path of safety lies in the scriptural rule, "Use this world as not abusing it" (1 Cor. vii. 31).

The house—the family is God's own work. He intends that it should be a blessing to his creatures. He framed it to be an abode of peace and love. He visits his handwork to see whether it is fulfilling its destiny. Let the disturber beware; an eye is on him that cannot be deceived, a hand is over him that cannot be resisted. Whether it be husband or wife, parent or child, master or servant, the disturber of a house must answer to its almighty Protector for abusing his gifts, and thwarting his gracious designs.

"Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God." How shall we best bring peace into a family on earth, and keep it there, until the little stream that trickles over time be lost in the ocean of eternity? Invite Christ into the house, and the hearts of its inmates. "He is our peace,"—with God and with each other. Invite Him to come in; constrain Him to abide.

VII.

THE FALSE BALANCE DETECTED BY THE TRUE.

"All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits. Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established."—xvi. 2, 3.

THE first of these two verses tells how a man goes wrong, and the second how he may be set right again. He is led into error by doing what pleases himself; the rule for recovery is to commit the works to the Lord, and see that they are such as will please him. When we weigh our thoughts and actions in the balances of our own desires, we shall inevitably go astray: when we lay them before God, and submit to his pleasure, we shall be guided into truth and righteousness.

Such is the purport of the two verses in general; attend now to the particulars in detail: "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes." To a superficial observer this declaration may seem inconsistent with experience; but he who wrote these words has fathomed fully the deep things of a human spirit. As a general rule, men do the things which they think right, and think the things right which themselves do. Not many men do what they think evil, and while they think it evil. The acts may be obviously evil, but the actor persuades himself of the contrary, at least until they are done. There is an amazing

power of self-deception in a human heart. It is deceitful above all things. It is beyond conception cunning in making that appear right which is felt pleasant. Some, we confess, are so hardened that they sin in the face of conscience, and over its neck; but for one bold, bad man, who treads on an awakened conscience in order to reach the gratification of his lust, there are ten cowards who drug the watcher into slumber, that they may sin in peace. As a general rule, it may be safely said, if you did not think the act innocent, you would not do it; but when you have a strong inclination to do it, you soon find means to persuade yourself that it is innocent. After all, the real motive power that keeps the wheels of human life going round is this:—Men like the things that they do, and do the things that they like. In his own eyes a man's ways are clean. If he saw them filthy, he would not walk in them. But when he desires to walk in a particular way, he soon begins to count it clean, in order that he may peacefully walk in it.

In his *own eyes:* Mark the meaning of these words. Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Eyes other than his own are witnessing all the life-course of a man. The eyes of the Lord are in every place. He does not adopt our inclination as the standard of right and wrong. He will not borrow our balances to determine his own judgment in that day. "The Lord weigheth the spirits." Not a thought, not a motive, trembles in the breast which he does not weigh; more evidently, though not more surely, are the gross and palpable deeds of our life open before him! He has a balance nice enough to weigh motives—

the animating soul of our actions; our actions themselves will not escape his scrutiny.

Before we proceed to any "work," we should weigh it, while yet it is a "spirit" unembodied, in the balances which will be used in the judgment of the great day. Letters are charged in the post-office according to their weight. I have written and sealed a letter consisting of several sheets. I desire that it should pass; I think that it will; but I know well that it will not be allowed to pass because I desire that it should, or think that it will; I know well it will be tested by imperial weights and imperial laws. Before I plunge it beyond my reach, under the control of the public authorities, I place it on a balance which stands on the desk before me—a balance not constructed to please my desires, but honestly adjusted to the legal standard. I weigh it there, and check it myself by the very rules which the Government will apply. The children of this world are wise for their own interests. We do not shut our eyes, and cheat ourselves as to temporal things and human governments: why should we attempt to deceive where detection is certain and retribution complete? On the table before you lies the very balance in which the Ruler of heaven and earth will weigh both the body of the act and the motive, the soul that inspires it. Weigh your purposes in this balance before you launch them forth in action. The man's ways are unclean, although, through a deceitful heart, they are clean in his own eyes. By what means, therefore, "shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps. cxix. 9).

A most interesting practical rule is laid down as applicable to the case—"Commit thy works unto the Lord;" and a promise follows it—"Thy thoughts shall be established." It is a common and a sound advice, to ask counsel of the Lord before undertaking any work. Here we have the counterpart lesson equally precious—commit the work to the Lord, after it is done. The Hebrew idiom gives peculiar emphasis to the precept—Roll it over on Jehovah. Mark the beautiful reciprocity of the two, and how they constitute a circle between them. While the act is yet in embryo as a purpose in your mind, ask counsel of the Lord, that it may be crushed in the birth or embodied in righteousness. When it is embodied, bring the work back to the Lord, and give it over into his hands as the fruit of the thought which you besought him to inspire; give it over into his hands as an offering which he may accept, an instrument which he may employ. Bring the work, when it is done, to the Lord; and what will follow?—"thy thoughts shall be established." Bring back the actions of your life to God, one by one, after they are done, and thereby the purposes of your heart will be made pure and steadfast: the evil will be chased away like smoke before the wind, and the good will be executed in spite of all opposition; for "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

A boy, while his stock of experience is yet small, is employed by his father to lend assistance in certain mechanical operations. Pleased to think himself useful, he bounds into the work with heart and hand; but

during the process, he has many errands to his father. At the first he runs to ask his father how he ought to begin; and when he has done a little, he carries the work to his father, fondly expecting approval, and asking further instructions. Oh, when will the children of God in the regeneration experience and manifest the same spirit of adoption which animates dear children as an instinct of nature towards fathers of their flesh! These two rules, following each other in a circle, would make the outspread field of a Christian's life sunny, and green, and fruitful, as the circling of the solar system brightens and fertilizes the earth.

Perhaps this latter hemisphere of duty's revolving circle is the more difficult of the two. Perhaps most professing Christians find it easier to go to God beforehand, asking what they should do, than to return to him afterwards to place their work in his hands. This may in part account for the want of answer to prayer,—at least the want of a knowledge that prayer has been answered. If you do not complete the circle, your message by telegraph will never reach its destination, and no answer will return. We send in earnest prayer for direction. Thereafter we go into the world of action. But if we do not bring the action back to God, the circle of the supplication is not completed. The prayer does not reach the throne; the message acknowledging it comes not back to the suppliant's heart. To bring all the works to the Lord would be in the character of a dear child. It would please the Father. A young man came to his father, and received instructions as to his employment for the day.

"Go work in my vineyard," was the parent's command. "I go, sir," was the ready answer of the son. So far, all was well; but the deed that followed was disobedience. The son went not to work in the father's vineyard: but we do not learn that he came back in the evening to tell his father what he had done. To have done so would either have kept him right, or corrected him for doing wrong.

But some of the works are evil, and how could you dare to roll these over on the Lord? Ah! there lies the power of this practical rule. If it were our fixed and unvarying practice to bring all our works and lay them into God's hands, we would not dare to do any except those that he would smile upon. But others, though not positively evil, may be of trifling importance, and the doer may decline to bring them to the King, not because they are impure, but because they are insignificant. The spirit of bondage betrays itself here, and not the spirit of adoption. They are small; they are affairs of children; trouble not the Master. Ah! this adviser is of the earth, earthy: he knows not the Master's mind. The Master himself has spoken to the point: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." Be assured, little children, whether in the natural family of man or the spiritual family of God, act in character. There is no hypocrisy about them. The things they bring are little things. Children speak as children, yet He does not beckon them away. He rebukes those who would. He welcomes and blesses the little ones. Nay, more; He tells us plainly that we must be like them ere we

enter his kingdom. Like little children without hypocrisy bring all your affairs to him, and abandon those that he would grieve to look upon. Bring to him all the works that you do, and you will not do any that you could not bring to him.

"When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (ver. 7). There is, it seems, such a thing as pleasing God. If it could not exist on earth, it would not be named from heaven. Even to try this is a most valuable exercise. There would be more sunlight in a believer's life if he could leave the dull negative fear of judgment far behind as a motive of action, and bound forward into the glad positive, a hopeful effort to please God. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb. xi. 6); therefore with faith it is possible. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God;" therefore they that are in the Spirit can. In this aspect of a believer's course, as in all others, Jesus has left us an example that we should follow his steps: "I do always those things that please Him" (John viii. 29). The glad obedience of the saved should not be thought inconsistent with the simple trust of the sinful. A true disciple is zealous of good works; it is a spurious faith that is jealous of them. Those who, being justified by faith, are most deeply conscious that their works are worthless, strive most earnestly to do worthy works.

This, like that which enjoins obedience to parents, is a commandment "with promise." When your ways please God, he will make even your enemies to be at peace with you. This is one of two principles that stand to-

gether in the word, and act together in the divine administration. Its counterpart and complement is, "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he must suffer persecution." They seem opposite, yet, like night and day, summer and winter, they both proceed from the same God, and work together for good to his people. It is true that the mighty of the earth are overawed by goodness; and it is also true that likeness to the Lord exposes the disciple to the persecution which his Master endured. Both are best: neither could be wanted. If the principle that goodness exposes to persecution prevailed everywhere and always, the spirit would fail before Him and the souls which He has made. Again, if the principle that goodness conciliates the favour of the world prevailed everywhere and always, discipline would be done, and the service of God would degenerate into mercenary self-interest. If the good received only and always persecution for their goodness, their life could not endure, and the generation of the righteous would become extinct: if the good received only and always favour from men, their spiritual life would be overlaid, and choked in the thick folds of worldly prosperity. A beautiful balance of opposites is employed to produce one grand result. It is like the balance of antagonist forces, which keeps the planets in their places, and maintains the harmony of the universe. Temporal prosperity and temporal distress, the world's friendship and its enmity, are both formidable to the children of God. Our Father in heaven, guarding against the danger on either side, employs the two reciprocally to hold each other in check. Human applause

on this side is a dangerous enemy, and it is made harmless by the measure of persecution which the godly must endure: on the other side, the enmity of a whole world is a weight under which the strongest would at last succumb; but it is made harmless by the opposite law,—the law by which true goodness conciliates favour even in an evil world. A Christian in the world is like a human body in the sea,—there is a tendency to sink and a tendency to swim. A very small force in either direction will turn the scale. Our Father in heaven holds the elements of nature and the passions of men at his own disposal. His children need not fear, for he keeps the balance in his own hands.

VIII.

MERCY AND TRUTH.

"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil."—xvi. 6.

No object can well be more dull and meaningless than the stained window of an ancient church, as long as you stand without and look toward a dark interior; but when you stand within the temple, and look through that window upon the light of heaven, the still, sweet, solemn forms that lie in it start into life and loveliness. The beauty was all conceived in the mind and wrought by the hand of the ancient artist whose bones now lie mouldering in the surrounding church-yard; but the beauty lies hid until the two requisites come together,—a seeing eye within, and a shining light without. We often meet a verse on the page of the Old Testament scriptures very like those ancient works of art. The beauty of holiness is in it,—put into it by the Spirit from the first; and yet its meaning was not fully known until the Sun of Righteousness arose, and the Israel of God, no longer kept in the outer court, entered through the rent veil, and, from the Holy of Holies, looked through the ancient record on an illumined heaven. Many hidden beauties burst into view on the pages of the Bible, when Faith's open eye looks through it on the face of Jesus.

One of these texts is now before us. There is more in

it than met the reader's eye before Christ came. The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the Baptist. The feeblest of the faithful after the incarnation sees more meaning in the Bible than the eagle eye of the mightiest prophet could discern before it. "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged." That line of the Scriptures becomes thoroughly transparent only when you hold it up between you and Christ crucified.

The subject is the expiation of sin. The term is the one which is employed in connection with the bloody sacrifices. It intimates that sin is purged by the sacrifice of a substitute. The two clauses of the verse, balanced against each other in the usual form, seem to point to the two great facts which constitute redemption,—pardon and obedience. The first clause tells how the guilt of sin is forgiven; the second, how the power of sin is subdued. The first speaks of the pardon which comes down from God to man; the second, of the obedience which then and therefore rises up from man to God. Solomon unites the two constituent elements of a sinner's deliverance in the same order that his father experienced them: "I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments" (Ps. cxix. 166). It is when iniquity is purged by free grace that men practically depart from evil.

How then is iniquity purged? By mercy and truth. The same two things are repeatedly proclaimed as the grand distinguishing fruit of Christ's incarnation by the disciple that leant on his breast (John i. 14, 17). "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," whether you take the term "truth" in its most general sense, or in its specific ap-

plication as the fulfilment of the types. The law, according to the thunders of Sinai, gives one of these; and the gospel, according to the imaginations of corrupt men, gives another: but only in Christ crucified both unite. The law from Sinai proclaims Truth without Mercy, and the unrenewed heart desires Mercy without Truth. The one would result in the perdition of men; the other in the dishonour of God. Truth alone would honour God's law, but destroy transgressors: mercy alone would shield the transgressors, but trample on the law. If there were only truth, earth would no longer be a place of hope: if there were only mercy, heaven would no longer be a place of holiness. On the one side is the just Judge; on the other the guilty criminals. If he give them their due, there will be no mercy: if they get from him their desire, there will be no truth. You may get one at the expense of casting out the guilty multitude; you may get the other at the expense of putting to shame the Holy One: but apart from the gospel of Christ, both cannot be.

They meet in the Mediator. In Christ the fire meets the water without drying it up: the water meets the fire without quenching it out. Truth has its way now, and all the desert of sin falls on Him who bears it: mercy has its way now, and all the love of God is poured out on those who are one with his beloved Son. Iniquity is punished in the substitute sacrificed, and so purged from the conscience of the redeemed. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. This is the gospel. There is no salvation in any other. The Scriptures from

beginning to end testify of Christ. All their promises are yea and amen in Him. We shall never discover the meaning of "mercy and truth" until we "look unto Jesus." We shall never get our "iniquity purged" until we "behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." All the power lies in the great fact, that Christ died the just for the unjust; and all salvation comes through the simple act, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

This purging of iniquity is the first and great constituent of the gospel; and the second, which is like unto it, is, let the pardoned depart from evil. Only "by the fear of the Lord" can this command be obeyed. In preceding expositions we have pointed out that the fear of the Lord means the mingled awe and confidence of a dear child. Fear of the Lord is a very different thing from *fright at the Lord*. The reverential love which keeps you near tends to practical holiness; but the terror which drives you to a distance permits you to wallow there in everything that is unclean.

The fear which produces obedience is generated by mercy and truth united in the manifested character of God. Mercy without truth would beget presumption: truth without mercy would beget despair. The one manifestation would not touch the conscience of the transgressor, and therefore he would not obey; the other manifestation would crush him so that he could not. It is by the fear of Him who is at once a just God and a Saviour that men depart from evil. The emotion that fills a disciple's heart is, like the atmosphere, composed mainly

of two great elements in combination. These are love and hate. Together in due proportion they constitute the atmosphere of heaven, and supply vital breath to believers on the earth. Love of the Saviour who forgives his sin, and hatred of the sin that crucified his Saviour,—these two, in one rich and well-proportioned amalgam, make up the vital element of saints. Separated they cannot be. To dissolve their union is to change their essence. As well might one of the atmosphere's constituent gases sustain the life of man as one of these emotions satisfy a saved sinner. The separation indeed is impossible,—perhaps we should say inconceivable. Hatred of sin is but the lower side of love to the Saviour, and love to the Saviour is but the upper side of hatred to sin. In the new nature there is a twofold strain or leaning, acting constantly like an instinct, although much impeded in its exercise,—a strain or bent of heart towards the Lord and away from sin. They who are near to God depart from evil; and they who really depart from evil draw near to God. The man in the Gospel (Luke xii. 45) "said in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming," and then began in his practice to "beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken." At the two extremities stand the "Lord" and "evil;" in the midst, this man. He cannot move nearer this side without departing farther from that. If he draw near the Lord, he will depart from evil: if he draw near to evil, he must put the Lord far away. When a man determines on a course of actual transgression, he puts God out of all his thoughts: when he desires to escape the snares of

Satan, he must walk closely with God. A people near to Him is a people far from wickedness: a people far from wickedness is a people near to Him. Absolutely and in origin, there is none good save one, and that is God: comparatively among men, the more godly, the more good. In their course over a parched land, those streams continue longest full which maintain unimpeded their union to the fountain. Our goodness will dissipate before temptation like the morning dew before the sun, unless we be found in Him and getting out of His fulness.

IX.

PROVIDENCE.

"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps."—xvi. 9.
"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."—xix. 21.

THE Bible throughout teaches the providence of God in theory, and exhibits the providence of God in fact. The prophecies are one continuous assertion of the doctrine; the histories one vast storehouse of its fruits. The works are manifest; the Worker is withdrawn from view. "Thou art a God that hidest thyself," is one of the songs in which the trustful praise him. The clouds and darkness that are round his throne concealed him from the wisest of the heathen; and yet, at the cry of any Israelite indeed, he was wont to shine forth from between the cherubim, and make bare his holy arm as it wrought deliverance. When a stroke of judgment was about to fall, so heavy that its sound should echo for terror to the wicked down through all time, the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" Yet, with all their philosophy, the Athenians in Paul's day were compelled to own that they worshipped an unknown God. The knowledge of His ways is hid from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes. "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." If, as to power, faith can remove mountains, as to perception it can see through clouds. "The secret

of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant" (Ps. xxv. 14).

"God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence." There are two psalms—the 104th and 105th—placed next each other in the collection, which correspond to these two departments of the divine administration. The one is a hymn to God in nature; the other a hymn to God in history. In the first He appears appointing their course to the rivers of water; in the second, turning whithersoever He will the hearts of men. This psalm deals with the habitation and its furniture; that with the inhabitant and his history. These two songs exhibit an intelligence most comprehensive and a devotion most pure, circulating in the rustic community of the Hebrews, at a time when the conceptions of other nations on the same themes were grovelling and their worship vile. Both in the history that records the act, and the psalms that celebrate the Actor, the patriarch Joseph appears a most vivid portrait standing out of the canvass, and the Exodus stretches away like a landscape lying in the light. The persons and events that occupy that great turning-point in human history serve as specimens of the government which the Most High ever exercises over the children of men.

Providence is as far above us as creation. To direct the path of a planet in the heavens, and his own steps over time, are both and both alike beyond the power of man. God is as much a sovereign in appointing the bounds of my habitation now upon the earth, as in appointing the earth at the beginning to be a habitation for

living creatures. Our shoulders could not sustain the government; we should delight to know that it rests on His.

These two proverbs of Solomon announce in different yet equivalent terms that the two grand constituent elements which exist and operate in the divine government of the world, are man's free agency and Jehovah's supreme control. When it is said that a man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps, we must not think that the purpose of the creature is condemned as an impertinence. It is an essential element of the plan. Neither human purposes, the material on which God exercises his sovereign control, nor the control which he exercises on that material, could be wanted. If there were no room for the devices of a man's heart, providence would disappear, and grim Fate, the leaden creed that crushes Eastern nations in the dust, would come in its stead. If, on the other hand, these devices are left to fight against each other for their objects without being subjected all to the will of a living One, Faith flees from the earth, and the reign of Atheism begins.

The desires of human hearts, and the efforts of human hands, do go into the processes of providence, and constitute the material on which the Almighty works. When God made man in his own image, a new era was inaugurated and a new work begun. Hitherto, in the government of this world, the Creator had no other elements to deal with than matter and the instincts of brutes; but the moment that man took his place on creation, a new and higher element was introduced into its government.

The sphere was enlarged and the principle elevated. There was more room for the display of wisdom and power. The will of intelligent moral beings left free, and yet as completely controlled as matter and its laws, makes the divine government much more glorious than the mere management of a material universe. For God's glory man was created, and that purpose will stand; a glory to God man will be, willing or unwilling, fallen or restored, throughout the course of time and at its close. The doctrine of Scripture regarding providence neither degrades man nor inflates him. It does not make him a mere thing on the one hand, nor a god on the other. It neither takes from him the attributes of humanity, nor ascribes to him the attributes of deity. It permits him freely to propose, but leaves the ultimate disposal in a mightier hand.

When we seek for specimens of providential rule,—of devices manifold in a man's heart, and the counsel of the Lord standing accomplished either by or against them all, the Exodus is, and ever will be, the richest mine. Let us look at one example, and learn from it the character of all. The cruel decree, repeated in two different forms, devoting to death all the male infants of Israel, was one of the blows, dealt unconsciously by the oppressor's own hand, which went to break the captive's chain and set him free. It was an edict that could not be executed. Blinded by his own eagerness to achieve his object early, Pharaoh grasped at too much, and therefore obtained nothing. It is in this way generally that our Father in heaven protects the poor from the wicked devices of the

powerful. Evil is kept within bounds by being permitted to exceed all bounds. Its excesses make it barren. As well might Pharaoh have commanded the Nile to flow upward. A massacre of innocents, commanded by a tyrant, may be executed by his slaves. The babes of Bethlehem may be slaughtered by the decree of Herod,—a stroke against Christ in his own person; the Protestants of France may be murdered in a night,—a stroke against Christ in his members; but neither the Instigator of evil nor any of his instruments can secure the execution of a decree which permanently violates the instincts of nature. To murder day by day and year by year continually the infants of a whole people as soon as they are born, is impossible. God has made it so in the constitution of things. By the power of Pharaoh the Nile might be dammed up for a day, but all the power of the world could not stem its flood for a season. So, although the instincts of nature may be held in abeyance till the sword has done its short work on the babes of Bethlehem or the Huguenots of France, they gather strength, like the river, from the impediment that crossed them, and at the next onset will sweep all impediments away. Pharaoh's decree must have fallen aside as a dead letter when a few infant corpses had been washed upon the river's brim. In point of fact, the history contains no trace of its existence after the childhood of Moses. It served to prepare the way of a deliverer, and then disappeared. God served himself of Pharaoh's cruel law, and then crushed it by the instincts which he has planted in human breasts. The people of Egypt were flesh and blood;

therefore the purpose of their stony-hearted ruler could not be accomplished: they had infants of their own, and therefore could not day by day continue to murder infants, whose struggling limbs felt soft and warm in the executioners' hands.

The huge machine of murder, constructed for the purpose of keeping down the Hebrew population, having been set in motion, turned round once, and stopped to move no more; but by its one revolution, it threw a foundling—a capacious Hebrew mind and a fervid Hebrew heart—into the palace of the Pharaohs, to be charged there with all the learning of Egypt, and employed in due time as the instrument to break the oppressor's rod, and set his suffering kindred free.

Although God's hand is in it, and all the more because his hand is in it, the history, as to its form, is intensely human. Everywhere throughout the details, the purposes of men's hearts protrude; and yet God's hand fashions the issue for his own purposes as absolutely as it framed the worlds of the solar system, and gave to matter its laws. The history of ancient Israel is marked all over with the foot-prints of the Chief Shepherd as he led his flock, and teems with types or working plans for the conduct of the divine government to the end of time. Even the life of the Great Deliverer pointed now to one, and now to another feature of the Mosaic programme, as the needle quivers beneath the electric current. In the beginning of his life on earth he went down into Egypt and out of Egypt again God called his Son. At the close of his ministry, when he showed the three disciples a glimpse

of his heavenly glory, Moses was his companion, and Exodus his theme. Children understand and love that wonderful story. It engraves itself on their memory, and abides there even unto old age. The book is true to nature, and true also to grace. Children never weary of the tale; the children of God can never get enough of its spiritual lesson.

There is literally no end to the multiplication of impressions on the current history of the world, from the types which the deep fount of sacred Scripture contains. They are thrown off as days and years revolve, in number and variety all but infinite. The Angel is doing wondrously; it is our part reverently to look on. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord (Ps. cvii. 43).

Passing over providential arrangements on a small scale involving similar principles and leading to similar results, numerous as reflections of sun-light from the dancing waves, we select as an example one that in several features bears an obvious analogy to the Exodus—the present bondage and prospective freedom of the Negro race in the United States of America. The process is not yet complete, and therefore we cannot fully understand what the counsel of the Lord therein may be. We cannot yet predict all the turnings that the course of events may take; but the issue is not doubtful. We know that the Lord reigneth; we know also certain great principles that run through his administration. We wait confidently for the end of the Lord in that great conflict. He that believeth shall not make haste.

The device of many leading politicians in the United States has been, and is, to maintain three millions of human beings in slavery, to be bought and sold like cattle or any other species of property. There are, indeed, in the laws some shreds of protection for human flesh and blood, not accorded to other species of possessions; but these proceed upon low grounds, and never rise to the recognition of a brother's nature and a brother's rights. The citizens of that country have probably an average share of humanity in their personal character; but the institution to which they cling chokes up the channel through which the affections of nature ought to flow. They make laws on the one side to prevent excessive cruelty in the treatment of slaves, and on the other side to forbid the dissemination of knowledge, lest it should emancipate the mind while the body remains in bondage. These alternate struggles this way and that way are painful to the community that makes them, and by no means effectual to accomplish the end desired. To treat a man as the property of man, is to fight against nature and against God. He who falls upon this stone shall be broken. The nation, accordingly, is broken, is rent asunder, by a wound that refuses to be healed. Action and reaction are equal and opposite, as well in morals as in physics. One person or one race cannot hurt another, without receiving a corresponding injury in return. If my brother and myself are standing both together on ice, and I push him violently away from me, I have thereby pushed myself as far in the opposite direction. I may succeed in driving my brother out of his

place, but the same effort drives me also out of mine. The Americans are so situated with respect to their slaves. They cannot push the Africans aside from the best condition of humanity on the one hand, without pushing themselves as far from the best condition of humanity on the other. Man is not a fixture on the earth like the everlasting hills. The ground is slippery, and our foot-hold feeble at the best. It is not in our power to turn aside a neighbour from his right, and maintain our own standing and character as before. The master depresses and degrades his slave; but in that very act he has deeply wounded the tenderest part of his own nature. If the oppressed race are necessarily mean, the oppressing race are necessarily arrogant. As far as the slave is sunk below the level into brutish insensibility, so far the master is forced up above it into an odious unfeeling pride. It is in vain that the potsherds of the earth strive with their Maker. His laws are even now silently operating to adjust these inequalities. Some portions of their working may be already seen cropping out upon the surface.

Slaves, stung by injuries at home, and favoured by compassionate hearts abroad, were escaping in a strong steady stream to a land of liberty. A gradual exodus had begun, and the dominant power, by the instinct of self-preservation, adopted a device to arrest it. They passed an enactment, known as the *Fugitive Slave Law*, which requires that the citizens shall aid in delivering the fleeing African into his pursuers' hands, and imposes severe punishment on all who shall dare to harbour him

or facilitate his escape. This, it seems, is the best device which the powerful could employ to keep the feeble under the yoke. But it has failed, and will fail. Like Pharaoh's device to keep down his slaves, it contains within itself the elements of its own dissolution. The Legislature of the States has ventured to run counter not only to the principles of justice, but to that which in human breasts is a stronger thing—the instincts of nature. Fathers and mothers in the Free States cannot be compelled to deliver up a fugitive mother and her infant to the mercy of her pursuer. There is a law which lies underneath that shallow enactment, with power to hold it in check for a time, and to crush it at last.

That latest effort which the slaveholding power has put forth to secure their property has probably done more than any other single event to weaken their tenure, and ultimately wrench it from their grasp. The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand, whether the adversary opposed to it be an ancient despot or a modern democracy. The stroke which was intended to rivet the fetters of the slave more firmly, guided in its descent by an unseen hand, fell upon a brittle link, and broke it through. The newspapers announced that the cruel device had been enacted into a law. The intelligence fell like a spark on the deep compassion that lay pent up in a woman's heart, and kindled it into a flame. The outburst was in the form of a book, the chief instrument of power usually employed in these later ages of the world. It is certainly true, and is widely known, that the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law produced the book, and that the book caused a pano-

rama of slavery to pass before the eyes of millions in America and Europe, inexpressibly augmenting the public opinion of the civilized world against the whole system, root and branch. Let no one imagine that we are elevating little things into an undue importance. We speak of Jehovah's counsel, and how it stands erect and triumphant over all the devices of men. He is wont to employ weak things to confound the mighty. Long ago He employed the tears of a helpless child and the strong compassion of a woman (Ex. ii. 6) as essential instruments in the exodus of an injured race; and it would be like himself if, in our day, while statesmen and armies contend in the senate and the battle-field, he should permit women who remain at home to deal the blow which decides the victory, and distribute the resulting spoil. "He sits King upon the floods." "All are His servants." "Stand still and see the salvation of God."

The exodus of the New Testament, the decease which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem, when, by the shedding of his blood, and through a sea of wrath, he opened a way for his redeemed to pass over, teems even more than that of the Old Testament with studies of Providence. Caiaphas proclaimed him the sacrificed substitute for sinning men (John xi. 49-52), and Pilate recorded his kingly dignity (John xix. 19). Are Caiaphas and Pilate also among the prophets? They are, although they know it not. He who makes the winds his messengers, and the flaming fire his angels, can harness these untamed spirits, and yoke them to his chariot. He makes the tongue of Caiaphas preach the priesthood, and the pen of Pilate write the

sovereignty of Jesus. When God has a message to declare, he is not limited in his choice of the angel who shall bear it. He can compel the servants of Satan to do his errands, without even putting off their dark costume. Their own hearts devise their ways, but the Lord directs their steps. In pursuing their own devices, they unconsciously become the instruments of accomplishing the purpose of God.

"Pilate wrote a title," in Hebrew and Greek and Latin, and fixed it aloft upon the cross. The title so composed and published was, "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." In the same spirit the governor had already said, "Shall I crucify your King?" This testimony from his view-point served two purposes. It gave vent to the conviction struggling in his own mind that the Sufferer was innocent and divine: at the same time it afforded him the opportunity of taking vengeance on the Jews for the blood-hound cruelty with which they had hunted him down, and compelled him, against his own judgment, to give up the Just One to be crucified. He held their shame aloft to heaven, and spread it in three languages across the world. Such is the object which Pilate "proposes" to himself. But this man's weak vindictive passion God "disposes" so, that it shall proclaim to Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, that the crucified is the King of Israel. Pilate's shaft was well aimed. It reached its mark, and rankled in the bones and marrow of those Jewish rulers. The governor, whom their policy had concussed, now overreached them. They were ashamed that a formal title, under the supreme civil authority,

should publish to the indigenous multitude in their vernacular, and to strangers from the east and west in the languages of the empire, that the Nazarene on the accursed tree was their promised, expected King. They requested that the writing should be changed. Pilate rejected their request. It was now his turn to tighten the screw on the flesh of the victim. Revenge at that moment was sweet to his revengeful heart. "What I have written I have written!" and he pushed them aside with contempt. He determined to pillory these proud priests aloft upon the place of skulls, as the subjects of the Crucified. And yet God employed that fierce passion to print above the cross, and publish through all time, a testimony to the royalty of Emmanuel. Said not the Scriptures truly, "The wrath of man shall praise Thee?"

We have been contemplating the working of Providence in those great events which have nations for their actors, and a world for their stage. We have preferred to exemplify a principle by the larger specimens of its produce, as we are wont to illustrate the law of gravitation by the balancing of worlds: but that law may be seen as well in the drooping of a snow-drop, or the falling of a leaf. And in like manner our Maker's might and our Father's tenderness descend with us from great public events, and follow our private, personal interests, until they are lost to our view, but not to His, in the microscopic minuteness of a hair falling off or growing gray. In a storm at sea, when the danger pressed, and the deep seemed ready to devour the voyagers, one man stood composed and cheerful amidst the agitated throng. They

asked him eagerly why he feared not,—was he an experienced seaman, and did he see reason to expect that the ship would ride the tempest through? No; he was not an expert sailor, but he was a trustful Christian. He was not sure that the ship would swim; but he knew that its sinking could do no harm to him. His answer was, "Though I sink to-day, I shall only drop gently into the hollow of my Father's hand, for he holds all these waters there." The story of that disciple's faith triumphing in a stormy sea presents a pleasant picture to those who read it on the solid land; but if they in safety are strangers to his faith, they will not in trouble partake of his consolation. The idea is beautiful; but a human soul, in its extremity, cannot play with a beautiful idea. If the heart do not feel the truth firm to lean upon, the eye will not long be satisfied with its symmetry to look at. Strangers may speak of providence; but only the children love it. If they would tell the truth, those who are alienated from God in their hearts, do not like to be so completely in His power. It is when I am satisfied with His mercy, that I rejoice to lie in His hand.

X.

WISDOM AND WEALTH—THEIR COMPARATIVE WORTH.

"How much better is it to get wisdom than gold? and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver?—xvi. 16.

THE question only is written in the book; the learner is expected to work out the answer. We, of this mercantile community, are expert in the arithmetic of time; here is an example to test our skill in casting up the accounts of eternity. Deeper interests are at stake; greater care should be taken to avoid an error, more labour willingly expended in making the balance true. Old and young, rich and poor, should take their places together in the school, and, under the Master's own eye, work this pregnant problem out to its issue.

The question is strictly one of degree. It is not, Whether is wisdom or gold the more precious portion for a soul? That question was settled long ago by common consent. All who in any sense make a profession of faith in God, confess that wisdom is better than gold; and this teacher plies them with another problem,—*How much better?*

Two classes of persons have experience in this matter, —those who have chosen the meaner portion, and those who have chosen the nobler; but only the latter class are capable of calculating the difference suggested by the

text. Those who give their heart to money, understand only the value of their own portion: those who possess treasures in heaven, have tasted both kinds, and can appreciate the difference between them.

When a man has made money his idol and his aim, he may be made to feel and confess that it is a worthless portion. He may understand well that a world full of it cannot procure for him one night's sleep when he is in pain,—cannot dispel the terrors of an unclean conscience,—cannot satisfy the justice of God,—cannot open the gate of heaven. The man, in his misery, can tell you truly and intelligently that gold, as the chosen heritage of an immortal, is worthless; but how much better heavenly wisdom would have been, he cannot tell, for he has never tried it. As the man born blind cannot tell how much better light is than his native darkness; as the slave born under the yoke of his master cannot tell how much better liberty is than his life-long bondage; so he who has despised the treasures that are at God's right hand, cannot conceive how much more precious they are to a man in his extremity than the riches that perish in the use. A man knows both what it is to be a child and what it is to be a man; but a child knows only what it is to be a child. He who is now a new creature, has experience also of the old man; but he who has not yet put off the old man, has no experience of the new. Only those who have chosen the better portion can intelligently compare the two.

But even these cannot compute the difference. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard it. Wisdom from above, like the love of God, passeth knowledge. Even

those who are best instructed can stretch their line but a little way into the depth. How much better is wisdom than gold? Better by all the worth of a soul, by all the blessedness of heaven, by all the length of eternity. But all these expressions are only tiny lines that children fling into the ocean to measure its depth withal. None of them reach the ground. It is like the answer of a little child when you ask him How far distant is that twinkling star? It is very very far above us, he will say; but with all the eagerness of his tone and gesture—with his outstretched finger, and twittering lips, and glistening eye, he has not told you how deep in the heavens that lone star lies. As well might you expect to find out God, as find out, here in the body, the measure of the goodness which he has laid up for them that fear him.

In a time of war between two great maritime nations, a ship belonging to one of them is captured on the high seas by a ship belonging to the other. The captor, with a few attendants, goes on board his prize, and directs the native crew to steer for the nearest point of his country's shore. The prize is very rich. The victors occupy themselves wholly in collecting and counting the treasure, and arranging their several shares, abandoning the care of the ship to her original owners. These, content with being permitted to handle the helm, allow their rivals to handle the money unmolested. After a long night, with a steady breeze, the captured mariners quietly, at dawn, run the ship into a harbour on their own shores. The conquerors are in turn made captives. They lose all the gold which they grasped too eagerly, and their liberty besides. In

that case it was much better to have hold of the helm, which directed the ship, than of the money which the ship contained. Those who seized the money and neglected the helm, lost even the money which was in their hands. Those who neglected the money and held by the helm, obtained the money which they neglected, and liberty too. They arrived at home, and all their wealth with them.

Thus they who make money their aim suffer a double loss, and they who seek the wisdom from above secure a double gain. The gold with which men are occupied will profit little, if the voyage of their life be not pointed home. If themselves are lost, their possessions are worthless. It is much better to get wisdom, for wisdom is profitable to direct, and the course so directed issues in Rest and Riches. When Christ is yours, all things are yours, and gold among them. The gold and the silver are His, and whether by giving them to you, or withholding them from you, he will compel these his servants to attend upon his sons.

The ship may carry a precious cargo of this world's goods, but the main concern of the master is not the quantity and value of his freight. It is better to come home empty a living man, than to be cast away in company with your riches. Alas! I think I see many men spending their days and nights down in the hold keeping their eyes on the coffers, permitting the vessel which carries both themselves and their treasures to drift at the mercy of wind and tide. Come up! come up! This is not your rest. This is a tempestuous and dangerous sea.

Look to the heavens for guiding light; keep your eye on the chart and your hand on the rudder. Immortal man! let your chief aim and effort be to pass safely through these troubled waters and arrive at last in the better land. As to wealth, if you carry little with you, plenty awaits you there. "We passed through fire and water, yet thou broughtest us to a wealthy place."

XI.

THE HIGHWAY OF THE UPRIGHT.

"The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul."—xvi. 17.

EVERY man has a highway of his own. It is formed, as our forefathers formed their roads, simply by walking often on it, and without a predetermined plan. Foresight and wisdom might improve the moral path, as much as they have in our day improved the material. The highway of the covetous is to depart from poverty and make for wealth with all his might. In his eagerness to take the shortest cut he often falls over a precipice, or loses his way in a wood. The highway of the vain is to depart from seriousness, and follow mirth on the trail of fools. The highway of the ambitious is a toilsome scramble up a mountain's side towards its summit, which seems in the distance to be a paradise basking in sun-light above the clouds, but when attained is found to be colder and barer than the plain below. The upright has a highway too, and it is to "depart from evil."

The upright is not an unfallen angel, but a restored man. He has been in the miry pit, and the marks of the fall are upon him still. Even when a sinner has been forgiven and renewed—when he has become a new creature in Christ, and an heir of eternal life—the power of evil within him is not entirely subdued, the stain of

evil not entirely wiped away. He hates sin now in his heart, but he feels the yoke of it in his flesh still. His back is turned to the bondage which he loathes, and his face to the liberty which he loves. He hastens away from evil, and if he looks behind him at any time, it is to measure the distance he has already made, and quicken his pace for the time to come. In this way the pilgrim walks unwearied, nor dares to rest until in dwellings of the righteous he hear that "melody of joy and health:" "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 10). Then at last he ceases to depart from evil; for there is no more any evil to depart from. He treads no more his chosen beaten highway, because he is now at home.

The man who has found this highway and keeps it, "preserveth his soul." How necessary to each other reciprocally are doctrine and life! To sever them is to destroy them; and to sever them is a more common error in Christendom than most are able to perceive or willing to confess. Doctrine, although both true and divine, is for us only a shadow, if it be not embodied in holiness. Nothing more effectually serves Satan's purpose in the world than a strict creed wedded to a loose practice. This union secures a double gain to the kingdom of darkness. It keeps the man himself in bondage, and also exposes to shame the gospel of our Lord and Saviour. The true doctrine is necessary to salvation, because it is the only way of reaching righteousness. The preciousness of revealed truth lies in this, that it teaches how we may please God, first and primarily by the righteousness

of Christ, second and subordinately by personal obedience. He who keepeth his way preserveth his soul: conversely, he who departs from it shall perish.

There stands the word in all its simplicity and bluntness: the preserving of your soul depends on the keeping of your way. The way is obviously the life: no reader can mistake the meaning of the term. It was not the profession, but the "walk" of those Philippian backsliders that made Paul weep, and ranked them "enemies of the cross of Christ." The Lord himself, in the sermon on the mount, has settled this point with extraordinary precision and minuteness (Matt. vii. 21-27), especially in the parable of the two houses, that of the wise man built upon a rock, and that of the foolish man built upon the sand. He has graven as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond in the rock for ever, the lesson that a sound creed will not save a careless liver in the great day.

To contend for a high standard of doctrine, and be satisfied with a low standard of life, is a fatal inconsistency. It is a "damnable heresy," whoever brings it in; for it issues in the loss of the soul. At certain periods in the history of the Church, and among certain communities of professors, evangelical doctrine has prevailed, while morality has languished. This knowledge, dissociated from obedience, is a more melancholy object of contemplation than the actual idolatry of Athens, where the living God was unknown; as a blighted corn field is a sadder sight than a bare unsown moor. In the early Christian culture some fields ran waste in this way, on which much

labour had been expended; and to these the reproof of James is specially addressed: "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (ii. 20.) It is as false in philosophy as in religion to assume that a knowledge of the way will lead those home who refuse to walk in it.

In our day and our country, the supreme and fundamental importance of truth in doctrine is generally acknowledged and inculcated in the religious education of the people. This is both right and necessary, but it is not enough. Why should men separate and set up as rivals the knowing of the right way, and the walking in the way that is right? You may as well pit against each other the seeing eye and the shining light, some declaring for this and some for that as the one thing needful. Shake off prepossessions and traditions; go in simplicity to the Bible; sit at the feet of Jesus, and listen to the Teacher sent from God; and you will find that a so-called right believing which does not clothe itself in right living, so far from being a passport to safety, is an aggravation of guilt. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

When a wanderer has been met, like Paul, in the way of death, and led into the way of life, the end is not yet. Let not him that putteth on his armour boast himself as he that putteth it off. Those who have found the way must keep it. There are many out-branching by-paths, and many enticers clustering round the entrance of each. "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

While we learn in this verse that a soul is preserved by keeping the way, we may observe the counterpart truth glancing from behind,—"a soul is lost by departing from the way."

It is in the *way*, the *conduct*, the *life*, that the breach occurs whereby a soul is lost, that seemed to bid fair for the better land. It is probable that with nine out of every ten of our people in this favoured land, the enemy finds it easier to inject actual impurity into the life than speculative error into the creed. Danger to the soul is greater on the side of practice than on the side of faith. A shaken faith, I own, leads the life astray; but also a life going astray makes shipwreck of the faith. I do not teach that any righteousness done by the fallen can either please God or justify a man; but I do teach, on the authority of the Bible, that a slipping from the way of righteousness and purity in actual life is the main stay of Satan's kingdom —the chief destroyer of souls. When your conduct becomes impure, your belief will not continue sound. It is more common in the experience of individuals, if not also in the history of the Church, to find evangelical doctrine undermined by sinful practice, than to find holy practice perverted by a heterodox belief. A successful assault by the enemy on either side will ruin all, but in the battle of life the side of conduct is weaker and more exposed than the side of profession. If the spirits of darkness could be heard celebrating their success, while erroneous doctrines might, in their dreary pæan, occupy the place of Saul who slays his thousands, indulged lusts would certainly be the David who slays his ten thousands.

Young men and women! when you are in the place and the hour of temptation, look to that apostle who had sorely stumbled himself, and therefore, when confirmed by grace, was better fitted than others to have compassion on them that are out of the way; his eyes are red with weeping and his manly heart is breaking in his breast: he cries with an exceeding great and bitter cry, that should run through you like a sword in your bones: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which *war against the soul*" (1 Peter ii. 11).

Every one has a highway, and every one is a traveller. The whole human race are travelling, each on his own chosen track, across Time and toward Eternity. Every traveller has something very precious in his custody—the most precious of created things—his own soul. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" You will lose it, pilgrim, if you go off the way. The miners in the gold fields of Australia, when they have gathered a large quantity of the dust, make for the city with the treasure. The mine is far in the interior. The country is wild: the bush is infested by robbers. The miners keep the road and the day-light. They march in company, and close by the guard sent to protect them. They do not stray from the path among the woods; for they bear with them a treasure which they value, and they are determined to run no risks. Do likewise, brother, for your treasure is of greater value, your enemies of greater power. Keep the way, lest you lose your soul.

XII.

THE WELL-SPRING OF LIFE.

"Understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that hath it."—xvi. 22.

THE well is deeper now than Solomon in his day was able to penetrate, and sends forth accordingly a fuller, fresher, more perennial stream. Then, in ancient Israel, it was much to learn from the lips of the king all that the Spirit taught him about understanding as a well-spring of life; but a greater than Solomon is here teaching us, and the youngest scholar who sits at Jesus' feet may in these high matters be wiser than the ancients. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). Behold the lessons of David's son, expanded and completed by David's Lord!

Understanding is a well-spring to him that hath it: but in me dwelleth no good thing. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. A rainless sky makes a barren land. As long as the heavens are brass, the earth will be iron. There are many living well-springs on the earth, but the fountain-head is on high. The earth gets all the good of the refreshing streams as much as if they were originally its own; and yet it is indebted to the sky for every drop that rises in its springs and flows in its rivers. The springs are *in* the earth for possession and

benefit, though not *of* the earth as their independent source. It is thus with the understanding which becomes a well-spring of life to men. It is in them; they possess it, and enjoy all its preciousness: but it is not their own. It is the gift of God. They have nothing which they did not receive.

Two things are necessary to the opening and the flow of well-springs—deep rendings beneath the earth's surface, and lofty risings above it. There must be deep veins and high mountains. The mountains draw the drops from heaven; the rents receive, retain, and give forth the supply. There must be corresponding heights and depths in the life of a man ere he be charged as a well-spring with wisdom from above. Upward to God and downward into himself the exercises of his soul must alternately penetrate. You must lift up your soul in the prayer of faith, and rend your heart in the work of repentance; you must ascend into heaven to bring the blessing down, and descend into the depths to draw it up. Extremes meet in a lively Christian. He is at once very high and very lowly. God puts all his treasures in the power of a soul that rises to reach the upper springs, as the Andes intercept water in the sky sufficient to fertilize a continent. And when the Spirit has so descended like floods of water, the secret places of a broken heart afford room for his indwelling, so that the grace which came at first from God rises within the man like a springing well, satisfying himself and refreshing his neighbours.

Enlarging the germ of thought which Solomon infolded within the Old Testament scriptures, the Lord intimated

that this well, when charged and set a flowing, springeth up into everlasting life. There are many joys springing from the earth, and limited to time,—joys which God provides, and his children thankfully receive; but the characteristic defect of all these is, that those who drink of them shall thirst again. It is recorded of Israel in the wilderness, that they came one day to a place where were twelve wells, and seventy palm-trees. Here, then, were two of the pilgrims' chief wants amply supplied—shade and water: but we learn from the history that at another station in their journey, a few days afterwards, the people were reduced to extremities again by thirst. Such are all the temporary refreshments provided for pilgrims by the way. He who has solaced himself at these wells to-day will thirst again to-morrow. But the well-spring of life, the water that flowed from the Rock, will follow the weary all their way, and refresh them most when their thirst is greatest—in the final conflict with the latest foe. "That Rock was Christ."

"To him that *hath it*," said Solomon, will understanding be a well-spring. "Whosoever *drinketh* of the water that I shall give him," said Jesus, "shall never thirst." Both the Old Testament and the New distinctly teach that grace offered by God may only increase the condemnation: it is grace accepted by man that saves. There is plenty in the fountain, for "God is love;" and yet you may thirst again, and thirst for ever. There is plenty falling, for in Christ our Brother, and for us, all the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells; and yet you may thirst again, and thirst for ever. The Son of God came

the Life of men, and yet many men live not. The Son of God came the Light of the world, and yet whole nations are sitting in darkness. "He that hath the Son hath life." He is the wisdom of God. This wisdom is life "to him that hath it;" but the greatness of this salvation, and the freeness of its offer, only aggravate the guilt of those who neglect or despise it.

Thirst and water, the appetite and its supply, are fitted into each other like a lock and key in human art, or the seeing eye and the shining light among the works of God. In these pairs, either member is useless if it be alone. However exquisite in itself one side of the double whole may be, it is barren if it want its counterpart. Water can no more nourish fruit alone than dust; dust can no more nourish fruit alone than water. Let the dust be refreshed by water,—let water saturate the dust. The two apart were both barren: their union will be prolific. Thirst without water is merely pain: water without thirst is merely waste. It is when thirst receives water, water quenches thirst, that a substantial benefit accrues. We should carefully observe this inexorable law of nature, and learn that it reigns with all its rigour in the spiritual sphere. Men who personally reject the gospel seem to expect that the gospel will save them notwithstanding. Understanding cannot be a well-spring of life to him that hath it not. The terms are, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Even the love of God cannot offer more favourable terms than these, and it remains true, that those who will not take the water of life perish for want of it. At Jerusalem, in the days

of his flesh, on the last day of the feast, Jesus uttered a great cry. It was a cry of fear and grief. It came from the breaking heart of the Man of Sorrows. He feared, as the feast days were passing, lest the time of mercy should run out, and those lingerers be lost. He who knew what is in man and before him, was anxious: they who knew neither themselves nor their Judge, were confident. He cried out: they kept silence. His cry was, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii. 37). He saw the water of life poured out and running to waste. He saw, too, a multitude of lifeless, withered, perishing souls. What he desired to see in them was a thirst that would induce them to take the offered mercy. Alas! now when the Giver cries, the needy sit silent: a time will come when the needy will cry, and the great Giver will refuse to answer! The loss of a soul is an exceeding bitter thing at every stage of the process, from the beginning to the close. Now there is water, but no thirst: then there will be thirst, but no water. If these two be not joined in the day of mercy, they will remain separate through the night of doom. If God's cry, "Take, take!" be left echoing unanswered in heaven, man's cry, "Give, give!" will echo unanswered through the pit. If God's offer be barren in time for want of man's desire, man's desire in eternity will be barren for want of an offer to meet it from God. To him that hath it, this wisdom from above will be a well-spring of life;—to those who refuse it, life will never spring at all.

XIII.

THE CRUELTY OF FOOLS.

"Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly."—xvii. 12.

THE wrath of man is a dreadful thing. The mere recital of the havoc which it has wrought on the earth would sicken the stoutest heart. Who can calculate how many acts of cruelty, done by man upon his fellow, have accumulated for the inquisition of the great day, since the blood of Abel cried to heaven for vengeance against his brother? The rage of wild beasts is short-lived, and their power is circumscribed within narrow limits. Man has more cause to dread his brother than all the beasts of the forest. It is easier to meet a bear robbed of her whelps, than a fool in his folly.

Cruelties are of different species, owing their origin to diverse passions, and perpetrated with a view to diverse ends. Ambition has often steeped her hands in blood. Many sweet olive plants, especially of those that spring round royal tables, have been nipt in the bud, lest their growth should obstruct the path of a usurper hastening to the throne. Perhaps it is not strictly correct to say that war perpetrates, for it consists of cruelties. It is, rather than does, murder. Jealousy, too, leaves many victims on its track. And Superstition, Pagan, Mohammedan, and Popish, has lighted the fires of persecution in

every land, and relieved the world of those who had grown so like to God that the world could not endure their presence. These, and many other species of cruelties, have offended God and afflicted man ever since sin began; but the cruelty specified in this text is of another kind. It is not the cruelty of the warrior in his thirst for glory —not the cruelty of the persecutor, in his blindness thinking to please God by destroying men. It is the cruelty of a fool in his folly.

Nothing so exactly answers to this description as a drunkard in his drink. Both the tree and its fruits correspond precisely to Solomon's report. The proverb fully characterizes the violence done by drunkards, and can be applied to nothing else that is done on a large scale in our country and our day. An instance may be found of a fool's cruelty, apart from the influence of intoxication, more terrible to meet than the rage of a bereaved wild beast; but this kind is not characteristic of the nation or the age. In the records of drunkenness, cases answering to the description of the text are piled in heaps like the hills. Elsewhere they are either not found at all, or found so seldom as not sensibly to affect the general estimate. We are therefore not only permitted, but compelled, if we attempt an application of the proverb at all, to gather our instances where they are to be found,—among the fools who drive their judgment out by strong drink.

Instances of violence in this form seem to be increasing in number and atrocity in the present day. At all events, it is certain that they attract the attention of statesmen

and philanthropists much more now than in former times. Day by day, as our eye runs over the loathsome list of wife-beatings and wife-murders, by drunken husbands, we read at the same time, in the same columns, indignant denunciations of the dastard deeds, and peremptory demands for more stringent laws to repress the growing enormity. This species of crime, it is acknowledged on all hands, is the fruit of drunkenness.

The public journals are never long free from the details of some gigantic atrocity. Before one tragedy has passed through the usual three acts in presence of the public, another is announced, and begins to obtain its run. First, the curtain suddenly rises and reveals a new deed of blood. When the neighbourhood has wondered nine days at the cruelty of a fool, the solemnities of the trial succeed. The foreground is occupied by the public-house, and the process whereby a number of men divest themselves at once of the money they have toiled for and the judgment which God has given them. Many subordinate episodes adhere to the principal plot. Glimpses are gotten, through doors accidentally opened in the cross-examination, of the drunkard's naked children at home, or the coolness of the publican in the prosecution of his business. This act closes with the solemn answer of the jury's foreman, the black cap of the judge, and removal of the weeping prisoner to the cell of the condemned. The last short act opens with the sound of carpenters' hammers in the misty dawn, and closes soon with the dead body of the drunkard dangling on the gallows. A thrill runs through the crowd, and a sigh escapes from such hearts as retain

some tenderness. The people return to their employment, the newspapers chronicle the event, and it glides away on the tide of time into the darkness of the past. But ere these harsh echoes have died away from the ear of the public, some other she-bear in human form meets and mangles her helpless victim. The public is put through the same process over again. So frequently do these shocking barbarities pass before our eyes, that they have, in a great measure, lost the power to shock us. We hear of them unmoved, as things that have been, and that will be, and that cannot be prevented. If a tenth of the accidents, assaults, and murders, with which the folly of drunkards is year by year desolating the land, were produced by any other cause, the community would rise as one man and put forth all its wisdom and might in an effort to pluck up the evil by the root. The nation bears with appalling patience the tearing out of its own bowels by the cruel madness of the drunkard.

Not long ago the local authorities of a certain district in India sent to the supreme government a representation that as many as sixteen persons within the territory had perished in one year by the bite of a small poisonous snake, and requesting permission to set a price upon the head of the reptile, with the view of uniting the whole population in an effort to exterminate their subtle and deadly foe. The government granted all their demands, and proclaimed a liberal reward for every dead snake that should be brought in. The people, thus encouraged by their rulers, entered heartily into the plan, and the work was done. Ah! in compassion for my country, I am tempted to wish that

our scourge had come in the form of poisonous serpents. Sixteen lives lost by that plague within a year, in a population perhaps as great as ours, were sufficient to bind the rulers and the people together in a solemn league, and send them forth, as by the summons of the fiery cross, to root out their destroyer. Our annual loss in the ignoble battle is to be reckoned not by tens but by thousands, and yet we have neither head to contrive nor heart to execute any plan adequate to the emergency. We seem to be as helpless as the children that mocked Elisha in the paws of the bears that tore them.

But, great and numerous as the publicly reported atrocities of drunken folly are, they constitute only a small proportion of what the nation suffers from that single scourge. From the nature of the case and the position of the parties, most of the cruelties, inflicted in secret, are suffered in silence; most of the murders, done by slow degrees, escape the notice of the judicial authorities. To hurt a stranger once on the street brings a drunkard into trouble; but he may hurt his own flesh and blood a hundred times at home, and hear no reproof, except the sighs of the helpless sufferers. When the fool kills a companion outright at once, with a knife or an axe, the law lays its strong hand upon him: but although, by blows, and nakedness, and hunger, he wear out by inches the life of his wife and little ones, he escapes with impunity. From personal observation, within my own sphere, and the testimony of others similarly situated beyond it, I know that a great amount of crime in this form is left unpunished, unnoticed.

I have entered the house of a labouring man, at his own earnest request, and found in it besides himself an ill-clad wife and a sick daughter. On making inquiry regarding the girl's health, I have heard the wife and mother, in tones that had long lost all their softness, declare, "She is dying, and there," pointing to her husband, "*there* is her murderer." He made no effort to deny the charge, or even palliate his guilt, for he was sober and repentant at the moment. The appearance of the man, the house, the child, corroborated, by unmistakable symptoms, the woman's strong indictment. It was true: the daughter was dying, and the father was her murderer. But, fool though he was, he did not hate his child; he did not desire her death. When he was "in his folly," he treated her so as to waste her life away; and he returned to his folly as often as he earned a few pence with which he might purchase spirits in the nearest public-house. By long habit, and in consequence of the permanent effect which frequent inebriation had left upon his brain, he could not, or (what as to its effects on others is practically equivalent) would not refrain. Given a shilling in that man's hand, and a public-house within reach, and his intoxication follows as surely as any of the sequences of nature. It has done so for many years. All the neighbourhood knows it. Murder of the worst kind is done in that house in open day-light, and in sight of all. Murder is so done in many thousand houses—we say not homes—of this our beloved land, and, provided it be done slowly and without much noise, we abandon the victims to their fate, and permit the murderers to go free.

It is only "in his folly" that even the fool is more

dangerous to society than a wild bear would be. Comparatively few of these outrages would be committed if the perpetrators did not destroy their judgment and inflame their passions by drink. It is demonstrable that the guilt of the resulting crime lies mainly in the inebriation from which it sprung. If the fit pass off without any act of violence, no thanks to the man who voluntarily deprived himself of reason for a time, and so exposed his neighbour's life as well as his own to serious risk. Every man who makes himself drunk, thereby places the limb and life of his neighbour in danger. He has no right to do so, and he should be punished for doing it.

Morally and economically this nation suffers much from the lightness with which the act or habit of intoxication is viewed and treated, both by those who commit it and those who look on. In the public opinion it seems scarcely to be regarded either as a sin or a crime. Even where it is so regarded, the impression is trivial, and the prevailing tendency is either to palliate the guilt of the deed, or make mirth of it as innocent. When the crime of murder is committed by a drunk man, we would not remove any of the guilt from the perpetrator, but we would lay a large proportion of it on the act by which he bereft himself of reason. A man drinks all the evening, quarrels with his comrade at midnight, and in the quarrel sheds that comrade's blood. Although he was "in his folly," and scarcely knew what he did when he dealt the blow, we admit no palliation,—we hold him responsible to the full before God and before man. The guilt lies on the man who, being sober and intelligent,

made himself drunk and unintelligent. He is guilty not merely of the indiscretion of taking too much drink, but of shedding his brother's blood. The deprivation of reason by his own hand was the guilty act, and the guilt of murder lay in it, as the tree within the seed. The crime that followed, in so far as the controlling reason was actually in abeyance, was the unconscious consequence of an act already done. A Guy Fawkes might fire a train calculated to creep along the ground in silence for an hour before it should produce an explosion. That train might explode a mine, over which stood, innocent and unconscious, a thousand men. He who lighted it might be at a distance,—might die and be in eternity before the explosion, but, notwithstanding, he was guilty of the blood of all these; and the blood of all these would ooze through the earth, and trickle into the pit, and find him out in "his own place," to be a make-weight in his doom. In the act of drinking to excess a man fires the match. For anything he knows the other end of that match may be dipt in murder; and when it is fired it will run its course: he cannot extinguish it.

We all abhor the deeds of cruelty which the "fool in his folly" so frequently commits; but, alas! we have not all an adequate estimate of the guilt attaching to the man at the moment and in the act of entering into his folly. Public abhorrence and indignation should be stirred up and directed upon the act whereby a man turns himself into a bear bereaved of her whelps, and not reserve themselves until it be ascertained how many children the ferocious animal has torn limb from limb.

I shall record here, for the reader's benefit, the leading features of one case. I know it well, and shall tell it truly. A young man, now the only son of a widow, the only brother of a virtuous sister, began active life with the best opportunities and the fairest prospects. In the social circle he contracted habits of intemperance, in the usual way. By degrees he drank himself into delirium tremens. The disease returned so frequently, and with such violence, that it became necessary to place him under restraint. When his mother and sister, after bearing long, were at length worn out, a warrant of lunacy was obtained at the moment when he was "in his folly," and the fool was confined in the lunatic asylum. There he got no whisky, and, in consequence, long before his term had expired, he was in his right mind again. At the expiry of the three months he was dismissed,—for there is no law by which his confinement could be prolonged. He soon drank himself back into madness. Another warrant followed, and another period of confinement. Again came a cure in the asylum, and a consequent dismissal. Whenever his senses return, the law lets him loose; and whenever he is loose, he drinks away his senses. I have lost reckoning of the times, but for many years that young man's life has passed in regular alternations of madness produced by drink, and sanity produced by compulsory abstinence. He lives his alternate quarters at home and in the madhouse.

What has this youth done for his mother in her age and widowhood? He has lain a mountain of lead on her heart. Her burden would be comparatively light, if her

only son were in his grave. He debased himself by his own free will at first, but he cannot now work his own cure. His softened brain and scorched stomach draw in strong drink as a dry sponge draws in water. He is in the grasp of a disease which is incurable, except by abstinence from the stimulant; and if the stimulant is within his reach he will not abstain.

I have heard of a torture invented by the Inquisition which correctly shadows that widow's suffering. The victim is laid on her back, and bound to a table, with her breast bared. A huge pendulum, fastened in the lofty ceiling, is set in motion over her. Silently, heavily, slowly, it swings from side to side of the gloomy chamber, right over the victim's breast. A sharp blade protrudes downward from the bulb below, and above, the machine is so constructed that each vibration lengthens the rod by a hair's-breadth. As the eyes of the sufferer become accustomed to the dim light of the prison, she observes the quivering glance of the polished blade as it is swinging past. Nearer it comes, and nearer to her bosom, tortured already before it is touched. At length the knife's point grazes the skin. By the law of nature, the pendulum continues pitilessly to wag to and fro, tearing deeper and deeper at each vibration, till at last it lets out the heart's blood, and sets the prisoner free.

That widow is so bound; that widow's breast is so torn. Her only son is the horrid engine, set in motion by possessing demons, and playing with helpless and awful regularity over her. His alternate movements are slowly cut-cutting into his mother's heart. Swing-

ing obedient to that overmastering lust, he is tearing out her life by inches, heedless and heartless as the iron rod and bulb that wagged in the inquisitor's dungeon.

Thus the "fool in his folly" is tearing the flesh of the mother that bore him, more cruelly than a bereaved she-bear would, and the nation stands by indifferent or helpless, able neither to invent a cure nor to inflict a punishment.

I am witness of many murders, slow but sure. Some of the victims have broken limbs, and many have broken hearts. One class live on the wounds and bruises of another, while the majority of the public pursue their own business, caring for none of these things. I am weary of witnessing the triple wrong—the tortures of the writhing victims, the wild-bear ferocity of fools in their folly, and the culpable indifference of the world. "Arise and depart; for this is not your rest, because it is polluted." "A rest remaineth for the people of God." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." Those who have sailed aloft on the atmosphere, as ships sail on the sea, tell us that the upper side of the darkest thundercloud which threatens the earth, is like a vale of paradise basking in the sunlight. Thus, while the proclamation, "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God," is, in its aspect earthward, a terror from the Lord to alarm the guilty; it is, in its aspect upward, a consoling promise to the heirs that their home in heaven will not be disturbed by those wild bears that terrified or tore them in the house of their pilgrimage. When the Lord, and they who

waited for him, had, in symbol, entered into the eternal rest, "the door was shut." The clang of the shutting door resounds in both directions, a terror, indeed, to those that are without, but a thrill of joy unspeakable through all who are within. "Nothing shall enter that defileth."

XIV.

FRIENDSHIP.

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."—xvii. 17.
"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."—xviii. 24.

MUCH has been said and sung about friendship among men. Even the broken fragments of it that remain now on earth are sweet to weary wayfarers. The glimpses of it which we get in life are like those little isolated pools which stand in the deeper portions of a water-course in summer, when the spring-head has failed, and the stream has ceased to flow. Some broken bits of heaven are mirrored on their surface, when all around is dull and earthy. The burning eye gets some relief when it rests upon them; and the parched lips are refreshed by the water, such as it is, which they still contain. To creatures who are "but for a season," and have never known the fresh, full flow of the living stream, these little pools seem very pure, and cool, and deep. These, accordingly, have become the theme of earth's most joyful songs. Here in the desert they deserve all the praise that they get. We shall not lose sight of these little pools until the river flows full again. They will continue to cheer disciples on their pilgrimage through the desert, and will not be forgotten until they disappear in the river which makes glad the City of God. When the redeemed of the Lord

shall enter the kingdom, these remnants of true friendship, which were their rejoicing in the house of their pilgrimage, will have no glory because of the glory that excelleth. A new song will be sung about friendship when the new heavens and the new earth shall appear. Many disappointments in the past generate fear for the future, and "fear hath torment,"—a torment which dilutes, if it does not positively imbitter, the joys of an imperfect love; but perfect love when it comes casteth out fear, and the joy of the Lord from its fountain-head flows forth unimpeded, filling the chosen vessels to the brim.

In the Scriptures we learn where the fountain of true friendship lies, what is its nature, why its flow is impeded now, and when it shall be over all like the waves of the sea.

"A friend loveth at all times." This proverb might be employed, if not positively as a definition of true friendship, at least negatively as a test to detect and expose its counterfeit. Sternly applied, it would diminish the crowd of fair-weather friends that flutter round the prosperous, as much as the proclamation permitting cowards to return, thinned the ranks of Gideon's army when the foe was near. Love is a holy thing. It comes from heaven, and, according to the measure of its prevalence, changes the face of the world, and turns its desert into a garden. Men who are strangers to its nature frequently appropriate its good name. We flatter ourselves that we are loving, when we are merely selfish.

You love, and love much. You are distinctly sensible of that blessed emotion circulating, and circulating in great

volume, through your being. It is directed upon certain objects, now one and now another. Here is a neighbour, for example, whom you love. Both according to the definitions of the Bible, and in the estimation of the world, he is worthy. Surely then your emotion is pure on both sides; in its character, and its object. Nay; the conclusion is too hastily drawn. A number of mirrors are set round a little child. He looks into them all in turn, and admires each. What then? does he think the mirrors beautiful? No; he sees and admires only himself, although, in his childishness, he is not aware that the beauty which draws him is all his own.

Alas! we often use our friends only as looking-glasses to see ourselves in. We imagine that we are loving them because we look towards them while we love; but it is the reflection of our own interest, all the time, that leads us captive. Apply this proverb to detect the spuriousness of such love. The shining counterfeit grows black when you touch it with the word. A friend loveth at all times, and in all places. Love, while it remains essentially the same, appears tenfold more loving when its object has fallen from prosperity into poverty; as a lamp burning in daylight shines much more brightly in the darkness. Many will court you while you have much to give; when you need to receive, the number of your friends will be diminished, but their quality will be improved. Your misfortune, like a blast of wind upon the thrashed corn, will drive the chaff away, but the wheat will remain where it was. How very sweet sometimes is the human friendship that remains when sore adversity has sifted it!

Of the many steamers that ply with passengers on the Clyde through all the sunny summer, one only continues its course on the Lord's day. As no business is done on that day, the voyage is emphatically a pleasure-trip, and doubtless there are many professions of brotherhood and fellow-feeling among the joyous company. In the narrow river near Glasgow, when the air was bright with sunlight and the water's surface like a mirror, one of the passengers, who, finding the sail not sufficient of itself, had adopted other means to augment his pleasure, lost his balance and fell overboard. Although he struggled for some time on the surface, the poor man sank and perished, ere his friends, all dry and comfortable, reached, by a circuitous route, the fatal spot. If there had been one in all the crowd with the nerve of a man, not to say the love of a Christian in his heart, he would have leapt into that still water and held his brother up a few moments until help had come from gathering hundreds. While our Father in heaven reigns over all, we often need help from a brother's hand; and I pray that when I am in danger I may be surrounded by other friends than a company of Sabbath pleasure-seekers. I would not count much either on the pith of their arm or the compassion of their heart. That species of pleasure takes the manliness out of a man, and forces native selfishness up to its fullest growth.

Man in his weakness needs a steady friend, and God in his wisdom has provided one in the constitution of nature. Not intrusting all to acquired friendship, He has given us some as a birthright inheritance. For the day of

their adversity a brother is born to many who would not have been able to win one. It is at once a glory to God in the highest and a sweet solace to afflicted men, when a brother or a sister, under the secret and steady impulses of nature, bears and does for the distressed what no other friend, however loving, could be expected to bear or do. How foolish for themselves are those who lightly snap those bonds asunder, or touch them oft with corrosive drops of contention! One who is born your brother is best fitted to be your friend in trouble, if unnatural strife has not rent asunder those whom their Maker intended to be of one spirit. In visiting the sick I am often constrained to exclaim in glad wonder, What hath the Lord wrought! when I see the friendships of nature supplying a ministry in sickness for the poor, such in tenderness and patience as the wealth of a world could not buy for the rich.

"There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." He must be a fast friend indeed; for a brother, if nature's affections have been cherished, lies close in, and keeps a steady hold. I know how closely a brother sticks, for I have been warmed and strengthened by the grasp; and have shivered as if alone in a wintry world when it slackened in death, and dropped away. I know by tasting, both the worth and the want of a brother's love. It seemed the chief earthly joy of my youth. Perhaps the stream flowed more strongly because it was all confined within one channel, and that a narrow one; for I had only one brother, and him I had not long. We grew up together in childhood, and at the softest

period of life were run into one by kindred tastes inherited, and common objects pursued. While we were passing together through the tender but decisive stage of youth, he was smitten by his death-disease, and I was spared in health. One was taken, and another left: not so taken, however, or so left, as to make a sudden separation; for the malady besieged the tower of his strength three full years and a half ere its gates were opened and the life given up. Born of the Spirit, and having his new life hid with Christ in God, he was, and felt himself to be, beyond the reach of that enemy who was closing round the body, and cutting off its resources. As the outward man was perishing, the inward man, both as to intellect and faith, was renewed day by day. Through his weakness, and my strength, we were let into each other much more deeply than if both had been feeble, or both robust. It was something analogous to that other work of God in his creatures—woman's weakness and man's strength, so arranged with a view to completer union. Such a fusion, whether accomplished by a general law or a special providence, is good for man. We did stick closely together, till death divided us. His pale brow was in my hands when its aching ceased. His grave in the village churchyard became a place of pilgrimage. The memory of that brother cleaving to my soul, after he had gone to rest, was God's own hand holding me back from enticing vanities, at the period of their greatest power, that, undistracted by the tumult of the world, I might better hear his own paternal voice. Oh! when hindering things are taken out of the way of God's work, a brother lies very close to a

brother! He who comes closer must be no common friend.

And yet there is a Friend that comes closer than a brother. I do not venture to give a judgment here on critical grounds, whether the text contains a specific and intentional prophecy regarding the Son of Man, the Saviour. But this is not necessary. We reach the same object more surely in another way. The affirmation in the text is, that close though a brother be, there is a friend that comes closer still. It is the idea of a friendship more perfect, fitting more kindly into our necessities, and bearing more patiently with our weakness, than the instinctive love of a brother by birth. From God's hand-work in nature a very tender and very strong friendship proceeds: from his covenant of mercy comes a friendship tenderer and stronger still. Now, although in some sense the conception is embodied in the communion of saints, its full realization is only found in the love wherewith Christ loves his own. When the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, man found a Friend who could come closer to his heart than any brother. The precious germ which Solomon's words infold, bore its fully ripened fruit only when He who is bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh gave himself, the Just for the unjust. Thus, by a surer process than verbal criticism, we are conducted to the man Christ Jesus, as at once the Brother born for our adversity and the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. The brother and the friend are, through the goodness of God, with more or less of imperfection, often found among our fellows; but they are complete only in

Him who is the fellow of the Almighty. Whoever would prosecute the twin ideas to their utmost issue, must pass out through humanity, and settle down in "God with us" beyond.

In the day of your deepest adversity, even a born brother must let go his hold. That extremity is the opportunity of your better Friend. His promise, "Lo, I am with you alway," entering into your sinking spirit, kindles the light of life in its darkness, and your confiding answer is, "I will not fear, for thou art with me."

"A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." It is another example of the pervading law, action and reaction are equal. When love is received, it is reciprocated. It is one of the most repulsive features of fallen humanity, to take selfishly material good from another, and refuse to show kindness to a neighbour when an opportunity occurs. This phase of selfishness, pictured by the Lord's own lips, is held up for our reprobation in the Bible (Matt. xviii. 26-30). A man in his distress asked and obtained mercy on a large scale from his master, and then harshly refused a little grace, when a fellow-servant humbly besought it at his hands. The man had a friend, and yet would not show himself friendly.

Our best friendship is due to our best Friend. He deserves it and desires it. The heart of the man Christ Jesus yearns for the reciprocated love of saved men, and grieves when it is not given. "Where are the nine?" he exclaimed with a sigh, when one only of the cleansed lepers came back to praise him. Who shall measure the strength of that longing for the friendship of his friends

which drew from his loving heart the triple appeal, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Recall now the idea with which our exercise opened, that we may gather another lesson from it in the close. The separated pools remaining in the deeper places of the river's bed, after the river has dried up from it source, become narrower, and shallower, and muddier as the season advances. If no new supply come down, they will soon be dry. Even before they are wholly dry, the water is hot and stagnant, unsatisfying and repulsive; and after the water has exhaled, the place where it lay is noisome. Such are friendships of the earth, if they be of the earth merely. As life draws onward to age, one and another will fail you. The breadth and depth of your pool will diminish apace, as secretly and insensibly, but as surely, as a lake is reduced in bulk by evaporation, when the sources of its supply have failed. When friends become fewer, you have not the power which you possessed in youth, of forming new intimacies to supply the place of the old. Not only does the absolute quantity of available friendship gradually decrease; your capability of enjoying the remainder decreases too. Disappointments in the course of life do more to make us distrustful than success to render us confiding. The friends grow fewer, and feebler grows your trust in friends. It is a desolate thing to grow old in this world, and have none but the world and the worldly to lean upon in the day of need. The last little pool that lay in nature's deepest place has vanished like the rest, and the weary has not a drop of consolation now to cool his tongue! He

has always been without God in the world, and now he is without man. The nether springs are dry, and the upper springs he never knew. Woe is me for the friendless!

But for those who are in faith's union with the Fountain head another experience is prepared. To them that look for Him he shall appear. In due season a stream will flow in the desert. The little pools in the river-bed of their life will be lost too; not by a drying up, but by an overflowing. In the spring-time of youth close with the sinners' Friend, and he will not leave you comfortless when age draws on.

"One there is above all others:
Oh, how he loves!
His is love beyond a brother's:
Oh, how he loves!

"Earthly friends may pain and grieve thee,—
One day kind, the next day leave thee;
But this Friend will ne'er deceive thee:
Oh, how he loves!"

XV.

THE BIAS ON THE SIDE OF SELF.

"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him."—xviii. 17.

THIS proverb touches human life at many points, and human beings feel it touching them. It accords with common experience. It is much noticed, and often quoted. Evidence of its truth flashes upon us from the contacts and conflicts of life at every turn. This word falling from heaven on the busy life of men, is echoed back from every quarter in a universal acknowledgment of its justness.

It is true to nature—nature fallen and distorted. It does not apply to humanity in innocence. It has no bearing on the new nature in a converted man. It does not describe the condition which the unfallen possessed, which the regenerated aim at, which the glorified have regained. This scripture reveals a crook in the creature that God made upright. There is a bias in the heart, the fountain of impulse, and the resulting life-course turns deceitfully aside. Self-love is the twist in the heart within, and self-interest is the side to which the variation from righteousness steadily tends.

"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just." The word refers to the most common form of contention in the world. A man's interest is touched by the word or

deed of another: forthwith he persuades himself that what is against his own wish is also against righteousness, and argues accordingly. He states his own case. But he leans over to one side, and sees everything in a distorted form. Matters on his own side are magnified: matters that are against himself are overlooked. Viewing the whole case from this position and in this attitude, he gives forth a representation of it, as it appears to his eye; but the representation is false. His conduct is both a sin and a blunder. It offends God, and will not deceive men. We are not now dealing with a case of deliberate, intentional falsehood. We are not describing the vulgar vice of making and telling a lie. We speak of a sin that is much more covert, and to some classes, on that account, much more dangerous. There are amongst us lying lips and brazen faces not a few. There are persons who invent a new lie to clear each turn of a tortuous course, apparently with as much readiness and ease as you would throw your arms out now to this side and now to that, to keep yourself from stumbling in a rugged path. There are others who, in a sense, speak the truth with their lips, and yet have lies hidden in their hearts. The heart makes the lie, deceiving first the man himself, and thereafter his neighbours. The bent is in the mould where the thought is first cast in embryo, and everything that comes forth is crooked.

In my early childhood—infancy I might almost say—a fact regarding the relations of matter came under my observation, which I now see has its analogue in the moral laws. An industrious old man, by trade a mason,

was engaged to build a certain piece of wall at so much per yard. He came at the appointed time, laid the foundation according to the specifications, and proceeded with his building, course upon course, according to the approved method of his craft. When the work had advanced several feet above the ground, a younger man, with a steadier hand and a brighter eye, came to assist the elder operator. Casting his eye along the work, as he laid his tools on the ground and adjusted his apron, he detected a defect, and instantly called out to his senior partner that the wall was not plumb. "It must be plumb," rejoined the builder, somewhat piqued, "for I have laid every stone by the plumb-rule." Suiting the action to the word he grasped the rule, laid it along his work, and triumphantly pointed to the lead vibrating and settling down precisely on the cut that marks the middle. Sure enough the wall was according to the rule, and yet the wall was not plumb. The rule was examined, and the discovery made that the old man, with his defective eye-sight, had drawn the cord through the wrong slit at the top of the instrument, and then, from some cause which I cannot explain, using only one side of it, had never detected his mistake. The wall was taken down, and the poor man lost several days' wages.

It is on some such principle that people err in preparing a representation of their own case. They suspend their plumb, not from the middle, but from one edge of the rule, and that the edge which lies next their own interests. The whole work is vitiated by a bias in the rule which regulates the workman.

This is not a light matter. Perfect truth will be the consummation in heaven, and should be the steady aim on earth. Honesty sufficient to keep you out of prison is one thing, and honesty that will adorn the doctrine of Christ is another. He left us an example, and it is our part to follow his steps. The reproof of this proverb touches not the life of the man Christ Jesus. Guile was not found in his mouth. How calm and truthful is every statement! No one coming after and searching him could find any flaw. The disciples, though they loved and followed him, lingered far behind. Disciples now have abundant room for growth of grace in this direction. On this side there is a large field for progress in conformity to the example of Christ.

What do ye more than others? In the statement of your case, do you permit a selfish desire for victory to turn your tongue aside from the straight line of truth? He who is through Christ an heir of heaven has an interest in being true before God, infinitely greater than in appearing right before men. Why should he neglect the greater and follow the less? There is room for improvement here, and improvement here would tell upon the world. If we lived in heaven and walked with God, our bearing, when we were called to plead our own cause, would reveal our home and our company. If the whole tone and strain of our evidence, in a case that touched our own temporal interests, were cast in the pattern that Jesus gave, the world would readily observe the likeness and take knowledge of us that we had been with him. They would own the act as a fruit not indigenous on

earth, and conclude that the tree which bore it was the planting of the Lord. In all this he would be glorified.

"His neighbour cometh and searcheth him." If a man can detect exaggerations on one side, and concealments on the other, amounting to untruthfulness in their general effect, it shows that the fear of God was not before the eyes of the witness when he emitted his evidence. To walk with God in the regeneration is the short and sure way to rigid truth in all our intercourse with men. Acquaint yourself with him before you speak, and then let all the world sift your testimony. To make certain that you shall never be put to shame for your words by the searching of a neighbour, submit your heart's thoughts beforehand to the searching of the Lord. In vain would your neighbour scrutinize your testimony, if your God and Saviour had at your invitation searched the germ, while it was a purpose forming within your heart. According to the rural proverb, "The rake need not come after the besom." The Adversary will find nothing, if a greater than he has been there before him.

XVI.

A WIFE.

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord."—xviii. 22.

"A prudent wife is from the Lord."—xix. 14.

"The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping." "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman."—xix. 13; xxi. 19.

THESE three portions, scattered promiscuously over several chapters, contain three distinct but connected propositions. The *first* intimates that the marriage relation, as the appointment of God, and without particular reference to the character of the persons, is good for man. The *second*, that when a man, upon entering that relation, obtains a wife who is in her individual character a prudent woman, he has obtained a blessing above all price. The *third*, that when the object chosen to occupy a relation so tender and close is personally unworthy, the calamity to the man is great in proportion to the preciousness of the divine institute which has in this case been perverted. The three announcements may be more briefly expressed thus: 1. A wife—the conjugal relation as such—is a good gift of God. 2. When the wife is a good woman, there is a double blessing, in the nature of the relation, and in the character of the person fulfilling it. 3. When the woman's own character is evil, her position as a wife indefinitely augments her power for mischief. Having

thus once for all set forth the subjects in their order and relations, I shall not rigidly adhere to the logical arrangement, but permit the illustration in some measure to revert to the miscellaneous form which characterizes the original text.

Had the first text made the boon depend on the personal goodness of the wife, it would have been more easily understood; but the range is wider, and the meaning deeper, as it is. The word declares boldly, and without qualification, that a wife is a gift from God, and good for man. The text which intimates that a prudent wife is from the Lord tells a truth, but it is one of the most obvious of truths. The text which intimates that a wife is a favour from the Lord, without expressly stipulating for her personal character, goes higher up in the history of providence, and deeper into the wisdom of God. His Maker in the beginning said, "It is not good for man to be alone;" and after all the ill that came to him through that weaker vessel, the same word remains as true as ever. Although Satan tempted Eve, woman as she came from God's hand, is the meetest help for man. The catastrophe did not take the Omniscient by surprise; the event did not change his view.

"From the beginning God made man male and female." He knows what is in man whom he made. Of design he made neither complete. He left a want in each, that the two might coalesce into one—one flesh and one spirit. Woman, who becomes the filling up of the vacuum in man, balancing his defects, absorbing the excesses of his cares, and reduplicating his joys,—woman, by her constitution and her place, is a good thing,

and should be devoutly sought as well as devoutly acknowledged, a favour from the Lord.

The Creator of man gives peculiar honour to this ordinance. He has framed the world in accordance with it. The designed imperfectness of an individual runs through all life, vegetable as well as animal; and the same type meets us on every hand, even in inanimate nature. Duality is necessary to completeness. This feature runs down from units to fractions,—from persons to the subordinate members of which they consist. You meet it in the hands, eyes, ears, of your own body. The principle that two are better than one lies very deep, and spreads very widely in the works of God. Having set it thus in nature, he solemnly appoints it in his word, and guards it in his providence. When he made man in his own image, he gave great prominence to this principle by making him at first alone, and thereafter finishing the incompleted work. He defended the integrity of the institution in thunder from Sinai, and engraved it in the tables of stone. He chose it as the body in which his own spiritual relation to ransomed Israel might become, as it were, visible: "Thy Maker is thy husband." And when Christ came to make all things new, he expressly took the marriage union under his own protection; certified it as an original appointment of God for man; purged it of the corruptions wherewith Jewish tradition had overlaid it; and gave it over to his church in such terms, that his apostles ever after delighted to call himself the Bridegroom, and his people the bride prepared for his coming.

This union is greatly honoured by God, and much dishonoured by man. We should recognise this as one great cause of his controversy with us, when we lament the judgments that fall on the nation and the deadness that lies on the church. In treating lightly what he counts so grave, in defiling that which he desires to keep holy as a fitting emblem of Christ's union to the saved, the nation is provoking the Most High to jealousy, and suffering retribution, in the uneasy motion or abrupt rending of the various joints which bind society together. The extent to which this holy institution is profaned and disregarded, both in high places and low, is one of the abominations done in the land, for which those who seek a revival should sigh and cry.

Here is a presumptuous abuse which provokes the Lord to anger, and torments the community by infusing rottenness into its bones:—Among certain classes marriage is deliberately contemplated beforehand, and in the fulness of an evil time deliberately resorted to, as a cure to save a libertine in the last resort. In some quarters it seems to be scarcely regretted, that a youth with large prospects should run riot in early manhood, seeing he has marriage to fall back upon when he is wearied with his own ways. The slight and measured reprobation of this course, not to speak of the positive approval, is a daring defiance of the Holy One. Vengeance is exacted by the awful machinery of his providential laws. The shallow trick is not successful. Man cannot cheat the Omniscient. The barbs of punishment are bedded in the crime, and infallibly run through the criminal. When a young man, deceived it may be,

and encouraged by the opinion of those who surround him, throws the reins on the neck of his passion, he flatters himself that he has a good heart,—that at any moment, ere matters go too far, he has it in his power to marry, reform, and enjoy the staid, sober pleasures of wedded life. He flatters himself, indeed! He is laying a lying unction to his soul. Licentiousness takes out of a human heart the softness necessary to complete conjugal union. Although the wounds which a libertine's soul has ignobly gotten in the house of the strange woman may be healed, through mercy, to the saving of the soul's life, their effects never can be removed, until the body crumble into dust. There is a hardness which for ever prevents the peculiar fusion of nature implied in two becoming one flesh. Consciousness of antecedent impureness, and mutual suspicion thereby generated, constitute an effectual bar to the full fruition of the good ordinance of God. They who have dared the *knowledge of evil,* are inexorably driven from the garden, and must maintain an uneasy conflict against wild beasts without and thistles within, all their days. You cannot enjoy the pleasures of sin, and when these have failed, turn round and take the pleasures which our Father in heaven has provided for the pure. A treaty of alliance you may have, like those which potentates frame to regulate the intercourse of nations; or a partnership, like that which constitutes a mercantile firm; but marriage, as God appointed it at creation, and Christ described it,—marriage you cannot have, if you profanely grasp it as a convenience to stop your own excesses and decently cover the disgrace

which they have entailed. No; the real coalescence of two into one, which doubles the joys and divides the sorrows of life, is an inner Eden, from which the weary debauchee is debarred for ever, as if by an angel with a flaming sword.

"It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." Though the bond in itself be a blessing, an unequal yoke only galls the wearers. Every one has known some pair chained together by human laws, where the hearts' union has either never existed or been rent asunder. Two ships at sea are bound to each other by strong short chains. As long as the sea remains perfectly calm, all may be well with both; though they do each other no good, they may not inflict much evil. But the sea never rests long, and seldom rests at all. Woe to these two ships when the waves begin to roll! There are two conditions in which they might be safe. If they were either brought more closely together, or more widely separated, it might yet be well with them. If they were from stem to stern rivetted into one, or if the chain were broken, and the two left to follow independently their several courses, there would be no further cause of anxiety on their account. If they are so united that they shall move as one body, they are safe; if they move far apart they are safe. The worst possible position is to be chained together, and yet have separate and independent motion in the waves. They will rasp each other's sides off, and tear open each other's heart, and go down together.

See in this glass the different kinds of conjugal union which obtain in actual life, and the corresponding consequences. Let it be a real marriage,—let the two be no longer twain, but one flesh; and then, though the united pair may experience many ups and downs in the troubled sea of life, they will rise and fall together. Common troubles will never make them tear each other. The two in one will present a broader surface to the sea, and stand more steady when it rages. But when the two are not one—when the mysterious cement has broken, or never taken band—when they obey separate impulses and point in different directions, while yet they are tied together by a legal contract, their condition is dreadful. How many wretched pairs, separate and yet bound, are tossing on the troubled sea of time! It is now a racking check when the binding chain is suddenly tightened, and now a rasping of their sides when they come together. Such are the alternations of married life where hearts are divorced and legal bonds still hold fast. Now and then a faint shriek is heard through the whistling winds; and when the spectators look in that direction, one of the labouring vessels has disappeared. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath." This awful law is ever at hand to defend or avenge God's primeval institute. As becomes a great King, the rewards are great on the one side, the sanctions heavy on the other.

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"It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." Though the bond in itself be a blessing, an unequal yoke only galls the wearers. Every one has known some pair chained together by human laws, where the hearts' union has either never existed or been rent asunder. Two ships at sea are bound to each other by strong short chains. As long as the sea remains perfectly calm, all may be well with both; though they do each other no good, they may not inflict much evil. But the sea never rests long, and seldom rests at all. Woe to these two ships when the waves begin to roll! There are two conditions in which they might be safe. If they were either brought more closely together, or more widely separated, it might yet be well with them. If they were from stem to stern rivetted into one, or if the chain were broken, and the two left to follow independently their several courses, there would be no further cause of anxiety on their account. If they are so united that they shall move as one body, they are safe; if they move far apart they are safe. The worst possible position is to be chained together, and yet have separate and independent motion in the waves. They will rasp each other's sides off, and tear open each other's heart, and go down together.

See in this glass the different kinds of conjugal union which obtain in actual life, and the corresponding consequences. Let it be a real marriage,—let the two be no longer twain, but one flesh; and then, though the united pair may experience many ups and downs in the troubled sea of life, they will rise and fall together. Common troubles will never make them tear each other. The two in one will present a broader surface to the sea, and stand more steady when it rages. But when the two are not one—when the mysterious cement has broken, or never taken band—when they obey separate impulses and point in different directions, while yet they are tied together by a legal contract, their condition is dreadful. How many wretched pairs, separate and yet bound, are tossing on the troubled sea of time! It is now a racking check when the binding chain is suddenly tightened, and now a rasping of their sides when they come together. Such are the alternations of married life where hearts are divorced and legal bonds still hold fast. Now and then a faint shriek is heard through the whistling winds; and when the spectators look in that direction, one of the labouring vessels has disappeared. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath." This awful law is ever at hand to defend or avenge God's primeval institute. As becomes a great King, the rewards are great on the one side, the sanctions heavy on the other.

"The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping." Contentions are not pleasant in any circumstances, but the closeness of the parties, whether in moral relation or

of the evil lies on the side where there is predominance of power. But making all due allowance on this side, it remains sure and obvious, that the contentions of a woman, falling like water-drops on her husband's head, cause the drunkenness in many cases, and aggravate it in all. In illustration of another text, I have distinctly intimated, that if we had a greater number of sober husbands we would have a greater number of smiling wives: here, desiring to divide the word as one who must give an account, I say, on the other hand, if there were a greater number of smiling wives, there would be a greater number of sober husbands.

"Only in the Lord" (1 Cor. vii. 39), is the apostle's rule on this subject. In view of all the difficulties, it is sufficient, and it alone.

If these suggestions have been cast mainly in a negative rather than a positive form—if, like the Decalogue itself, their prevalent aspect be, "Thou shalt not"—there is a cause. Laws are made for the rebellious. The obedient find a great reward in the act of keeping the commandment, and the reproof which is aimed at presumptuous transgressors passes harmlessly over them. I would fain give the encouragement and the warning too; but, where the blessing and the curse lie so near each other, it is difficult to divide them aright. This divinely-appointed union is, in human life, like the busy bee returning laden home. The sweetest honey and the sharpest sting lie in it both; and they lie not far apart. But for the honey it has been created, not for the sting: for the honey it lives and labours, not for the sting. The

sting is there only to make the honey secure. That which is of the highest value is most sternly guarded. The armed sentinel keeps watch beside the jewelled crown. Every day, and all the day, the honey is gathered and stored and enjoyed: the sting lies idle in its sheath, and, except to ward off or punish violence, is never used at all.

Those who in marriage lawfully seek and enjoy the sweets wherewith God has charged it, complain not of the sting that never touches them. For thieves and robbers it has been planted there, and the honest have no desire to pluck it out.

XVII.

ANGER.

"The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression."—xix. 11.

"A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again."—xix. 19.

"It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling."—xx. 3.

TELL me the specific rebukes that most thickly dot the pages of the Bible, and I will tell you the specific sins that most easily beset mankind. In that glass we may behold our own defilements and dangers. If any vice is often reproved in the word of God, you may be assured it springs prolific in the life of man.

In this book of morals anger is a frequently recurring theme. The repetition is not vain. If the evil did not abound on earth, the reproof of it would not come so oft from heaven. There is much anger springing secretly in human hearts, and its outbursts greatly imbitter the intercourse of life. It disturbs the spirit in which it dwells, and hurts, in its outgo, all who lie within its reach. It is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing. Its presence goes far to make this world a restless sea, and its absence will be a distinguishing feature of the rest that remaineth.

Anger cannot, indeed, be, and in a certain sense ought not to be, cast wholly out of man in the present state. On some occasions we do well to be angry; but in these cases

both the nature and the object of the affection should be jealously watched. The only legitimate anger is a holy emotion directed against an unholy thing. Sin, and not our neighbour, must be its object: zeal for righteousness, and not our own pride, must be its distinguishing character. The exercise of anger, although not necessarily sinful, is for us exceedingly difficult and dangerous. It is like fire in the hands of children. Although it is possible for them in certain cases to handle it safely and usefully, we know that in point of fact they more frequently do harm with it than good. Accordingly we are accustomed, as a prudential measure, to forbid absolutely its use among the children. If anger in the moral department is like fire in the physical, we, even the best of us, are like little children. Unless we have attained the wisdom and stature of "perfect men in Christ," we cannot take this fire into our bosom without burning thereby ourselves and our neighbours. Thus it comes about, that although anger be not in its own nature and in all cases sinful, the best practical rule of life is to repress it, as if it were. The holy might use it against sin in the world, if the holy were here, but it seems too sharp a weapon for our handling. Let any one who tries to crucify the flesh and to please God, scrutinize his own experience in this matter, and he will find that the less he has felt of anger, the better it has been for the peace of his conscience and the usefulness of his life.

As usual in these laws of God's kingdom, suffering springs from the sin, as the plant from its seed. "A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment," and he shall

suffer, although no human tribunal take cognizance of his case. The impetuous tide of passion will listen to no counsel, and submit to no control. Although the flood springs within the man, it carries him away. The progeny as soon as it is generated, is too strong for its parent. He who this moment produced it, is next moment a helpless captive in its hands. When the frenzy runs high the "man of great wrath" gores right and left, like a wild bull, all who are within his reach; but, when the frenzy has subsided, he is tormented by a remorse from which the brute is free. More is expected from the man than from the brute, and when no more is gotten, heavy retribution is at hand. The conscience, bent aside by the force of passion, comes back rebounding when that force is spent; and then he who *acted* as a brute, must *suffer* as a man. A man of great wrath, is a man of little happiness. The two main elements of happiness are awanting; for he is seldom at peace either with his neighbour or himself.

There is an ingredient in the retribution still more direct and immediate. The emotion of anger in the mind instantly and violently affects the body in the most vital parts of its organization. Hot cheeks and throbbing temples follow the mysterious spark of passion in the soul, as thunder-peals follow the lightning's flash. In presence of this phenomenon, an unfathomable work of God within our own being, it behoves us to "stand in awe and sin not." When the spirit in man is agitated by anger, it sets the life-blood a-flowing too fast for the safety of its tender channels. By frequent commotions these

organs are injured: under great excesses they sometimes break. Thus, even in the organs of the body, impediments are thrown across the path of passion, and the flesh smarts for the spirit's waywardness.

The best practical specific for the treatment of anger against persons is to "defer it." Its nature presses for instant vengeance, and the appetite should be starved. A wise man may indeed experience the heat, but he will do nothing till he cools again. When your clothes outside are on fire you wrap yourself in a blanket, if you can, and so smother the flame: in like manner, when your heart within has caught the fire of anger, your first business is to get the flame extinguished. Thereafter you will be in a better position to form a righteous judgment, and follow a safe course.

"To pass over a transgression" is a man's "glory." This is like the doctrine of Jesus, but not like the manners of the world. It is a note in unison with the sermon on the mount, and at variance therefore with most of our modern codes of honour. It has often been remarked that the Bible proves itself divine by the knowledge of man which it displays; but perhaps its opposition to the main currents of a human heart is as clear a mark of its heavenly origin as its discovery of what these currents are. The vessel which moves up the strong stream of men's desires does not get from that stream its motive impulse. The breath of heaven gives it direction and urges it on. The best law on that subject which springs on earth makes it a man's glory to obtain satisfaction, and counts it his disgrace to pass an injury unavenged. We

may discover here how little civilization by itself can do for man. The rule regarding injuries which prevailed throughout Europe in the generation now passing away coincides precisely with the sentiment of savage tribes. The principle of the duel reigned so imperiously till of late, in military and semi-military circles, that the man who dared to pass over an injury was, by a very vulgar species of persecution, driven from his post and his profession. This sentiment, which happily is passing away in our day, neither marked the Christian nor made the gentleman. The same sentiment prevailed among the Highland clans of Scotland before the Bible reached their hearts, or roads led soldiers and sheriffs to their fastnesses. The most savage communities and the most refined stood, in the matter of the duel, nearly on the same level, and both were opposed alike to Scripture and Reason. "Looking unto Jesus" is, after all, the grand specific for anger in both its aspects, as a sin and as a suffering. Its dangerous and tormenting fire, when it is kindled in a human breast, may be extinguished best by letting in upon it the love wherewith he loved us. Let Faith arise and make haste and open the doors of an angry heart to the compassions which flow in Christ crucified: the incipient tumult will be quenched like a spark beneath a flowing stream. If you abide in him, sinful anger will be kept or cast out, and that which remains, being like his own, will neither trouble you nor hurt a brother.

XVIII.

A POOR MAN IS BETTER THAN A LIAR.

"A poor man is better than a liar."—xix. 22.

THE imperial standard of weights and measures has been sent by the King into the market-place of human life, where men are busy cheating themselves and each other. Many of these merchantmen, guided by a false standard, have all their days been accustomed to call evil good and good evil. When the balance is set up by royal authority, and the proclamation issued that all transactions must be tested thereby, swindlers are dismayed and honest men are glad. Such is the word of Truth when it touches the transactions of men.

Although society has, in many important aspects, advanced in these later times, it is our wisdom to cast former attainments behind us, and press on for more. Public opinion greatly needs to be elevated and rectified in its judgment of men and things. Society is like a house after an earthquake. Everything is squeezed out of its place. No angle remains square: every pillar is leaning; all is awry. The whirling world of human intercourse is out of joint, and must undergo a grand operation of "reducing" ere its movements become safe or easy.

Although here and there an individual may courageously protest, the great public opinion of the nation prac-

tically sets the gentleman high above the man, without waiting to define very precisely what is a gentleman. Exact definitions in this matter would go far to set us right. In misty evenings sharpers get more than their own, and honest men less. Day-light would put the parties upon a more equal footing. As long as any sharper, under favour of the thick haze that hangs over the public mind, may, by dint of a good coat, a gold ring, and a stock of impudence, pass himself off as a gentleman, and bear away the substantial benefits attached to that dimly defined rank, the people must lay their account by frequent suffering in purse and person. Every now and then the public is cheated and wounded; but for ourselves, we confess that we do not greatly pity the public. For most of its misfortunes on this side, it has itself to blame. You alighted fawningly on a scare-crow gentleman, guided by his costume and his equipage. You are now impaled alive on his sharp fleshless arms of sticks and nails. You are suffering, we confess, but we reserve our tears; for if you had looked for a man, you would have found one, and been infolded now in the warm, soft embrace of a brother. A standard has been set up in the market-place to measure the pretences of men withal, and those who will not employ it, must take the consequences. According to that standard "a poor man is better than a liar;" if, in the face of that sure index, you despise an honest man because he is poor, and give your confidence to the substance or the semblance of wealth, without respect to righteousness, you deserve no pity when the inevitable retribution comes.

Error in this matter is not confined to any rank. It is as rife in high places as in low. The tendency to trust in quacks seems to be an instinct in human nature, which education and experience can never wholly remove. Breaches of trust and fraudulent bankruptcies are certainly not diminishing either in number or magnitude. In the course of the last two or three years, the cases seem to have been more numerous and more serious than at any former period within the range of our memory. We sympathize with the denunciations launched by the sufferers against the depredators of every rank and every hue. It would not be easy to give them, in the form of moral castigation, more than their deserts. We accordingly make no effort to shield the delinquents from the blows that fall thick and heavy on their devoted heads. As that part of the business is done heartily, if not very wisely, by the public themselves, we shall step round to the other side, where we can see the castigators, and there endeavour to estimate what share of the blame lies at their own door. "There are two at a bargain;" in every one of these great and complicated frauds there are two parties. One alone, however evil in his own nature, could not bring forth any fruits of mischief. Swindlers would not produce much commotion in society if they found no dupes. Rogue and fool are pairs; either is barren if it do not meet its mate. Many are ready to lecture the swindler;—we have a word for the dupe.

"Do not cheat," is a needful and useful injunction in our day; and "Do not be cheated" is another. The trade of the swindler would fail if the raw material were

not plentiful and easily wrought. The reckless life of a son is, indeed, a proof of his own wickedness; but it may be also a proof of his father's self-pleasing indulgence. Such is the homage paid to wealth, that any man who, with some degree of adroitness, puts on its trappings, will be followed by a crowd of worshippers. "Covetousness is idolatry." Not without cause is the definition written in that pungent form. Every species of idolatry begets a kind of sottish blindness. The idolaters lose their common sense. They are given over to believe a lie. The wide-spread sufferings that periodically rend the community, at the discovery of full-grown fraud, are the strokes which our own sin inflicts when it finds the sinners out. If the community would cease to value a man by the appearance of his wealth, and judge him according to the standard of the Scriptures, there would be fewer prodigies of dishonesty among us. When we learn practically to honour true men, although they labour for their daily bread, and turn our back upon liars, although they drive their carriages, we shall be less exposed to the depredations of unjust men, and more under the protection of a righteous God.

There is a most refreshing simplicity in the language of Scripture upon these points. This word speaks with authority. It is not tainted with the prevailing adulation of riches. A dishonest man is called a liar, however high his position may be in the city. And the honest poor gets his patent of nobility from the Sovereign's hand. The honest rich are fully as much interested in this reform as the honest poor. Make this short proverb

the key-note of our commercial system, and these epidemic panics will disappear. Get this standard acknowledged in the exchange, and the reformation is accomplished. Let it become the fashion to frown on all falsehood, whether spoken or acted—all unrealities, however specious their appearance; let it become the practice, open and uniform, to honour the honest, as far as he is known, however poor he may be; and swindling will die out for want of food. After each catastrophe people go about shaking their heads and wringing their hands, asking, What will become of us, what shall we do? We venture to propose an answer to the inquiry: From the Bible first engrave on your hearts, then translate into your lives, and last emblazon aloft on the pediment of your trade temple, this short and simple legend—

"A POOR MAN IS BETTER THAN A LIAR."

XIX.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF STRONG DRINK.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."—xx. 1.

FROM our point of view it seems strange that in the Proverbs we should not have met with a specific warning regarding the dangers of strong drink until now. The book is eminently practical. It was a book for the times. It rebuked impartially the vices and follies of every class. Covetousness, anger, falsehood, dishonesty—all the more common vices that infest society have, in the preceding portion of the book, been repeatedly exposed and reproved; but hitherto drunkenness has not found a place in the discourses of this ancient Hebrew preacher. I cannot account for this, except by the supposition that the vice was comparatively rare.

If Solomon had lived among us, and written a volume of lessons on life in the same style as the Book of Proverbs, he could not have reached the twentieth chapter without a word on drunkenness. This vice, with its causes and consequences, would have crossed his path in every movement, and forced itself upon his notice every day. It would have claimed a place at an earlier stage, and continued to protrude through almost every paragraph. If such a book in our day and land should proceed as far ere any allusion to strong drink appeared, it

would indicate a bias in the writer's mind, and undermine the authority of all his teaching. Ah, it would be a blessed day for our poor beloved fatherland, if it were possible here honestly to compose such a sermon for the times, introducing intemperance at a late period, and saying little about it even then! Although the sin existed and produced its appropriate sorrows in those ancient days and those Eastern lands, it could bear no comparison with our experience, either as to its absolute extent or its proportion to other kindred ills.

In regard to the whole subject of intemperance, it is of the utmost importance to observe and remember the difference between wine-growing countries in ancient times and our own northern land now. The main points of distinction are these two:—1. The chief agent of intoxication among us is not wine at all, but a much more potent draught, which was entirely unknown to antiquity. 2. Even the wines which we use, partly imported from abroad and partly manufactured at home, are, by admixture of spirits and other materials, much more powerful as intoxicants than the wines ordinarily used of old on the soil which produced them. I adjure all, as they fear God and regard man—as they would save themselves and their brethren, not to overlook these distinctions. I entertain a sorrowful and solemn conviction, which I have often spoken before, and speak now again weeping, that many among us wrest to their own destruction those scriptures which commend the use of wine. To quote these expressions and apply them, without abatement, to the liquors now ordinarily used in this country, is logi-

cally incorrect, and practically most dangerous. It is quite true that wines capable of producing intoxication were made and used in those days: it is also quite true that there were both drunkards and isolated acts of inebriation in those days: yet it is neither just nor safe to assume that what is said in the Scriptures of wine is applicable, without restriction, to our ardent spirits or brandied wines. As to the measure of the difference, exact knowledge is probably not attainable, and it does not become any one to dogmatize; but if all were induced to acknowledge that there is a difference, and stirred up to seek direction for themselves, from Him who gives the word, as to how far a scriptural commendation of the weaker may be transferred also to the stronger stimulant, our object would be obtained; for they who seek shall find: the meek He will guide.

It would be out of place to agitate here the questions regarding the nature of ancient wines, and the meaning of the several different Hebrew and Greek words indiscriminately translated "wine" in the vernacular version of the Scriptures. I deem it my duty, however, to record at this place the indisputable facts: 1. That some of the wines of antiquity possessed the intoxicating property in various degrees, and some of them did not possess it at all. 2. That several terms, totally distinct from each other in etymology, are in the original Scriptures applied to the manufactured juice of the grape, and, as a general rule, rendered in our version indiscriminately by the term "wine." I take this opportunity further of expressing, sorrowfully and solemnly, my conviction that the questions arising

out of these facts in our day, are in themselves as interesting, and in their bearing as important, as any questions of history or philology can possibly be. It may be that the unwise attempting to solve them fall into dangerous mistakes, and that the wisest cannot solve them fully; but the questions are grave and worthy of the most serious consideration. To ignore them as impertinent or trifling, and quote from the English Bible a text about ancient Judean wine in support of modern Scottish whisky, is not right, and cannot long be successful.

Avoiding, therefore, the examination of particulars, as being, on account of its necessary length, unsuitable for these pages, I submit a general proposition, which I believe all my readers will feel to be safe and moderate: *The expressions in Scripture which commend wine and strong drink are* LESS *applicable to the liquors in ordinary use among us, and the expressions which denounce them,* MORE. How much less, and how much more, it is difficult precisely to tell. Every one must judge for himself; as for me, I shall, God helping me, endeavour, in the difficulty, to lean to the safer side.

The characteristic of strong drink which this text singles out is its *deceitfulness.* In the illustration of it I shall exclusively regard our own day and our own circumstances. The warnings of Scripture may be intensified manifold when brought to bear on the power of our intoxicants to "mock" their victims. If the fruit of his own vine sometimes chastised the unwary Israelite with whips, the fiery products of our distilleries chastise the nation with scorpions. The little finger of strong drink

in modern times is thicker than the loins of its father and representative in Solomon's day. The deceits which our enemy practises are legion; and legion too are the unwise "who are deceived thereby." I shall now enumerate a few of these lying devices.

1. A great quantity of precious food is destroyed in this country that strong drink may be extracted from the rubbish. Barley, the principal material, is a wholesome grain, and if it be unsuited to the taste of the community in the form of food, others might be cultivated in its stead. The fruit of the earth, therefore, which is fit for the food of man, is destroyed by man's own hand, to supply him with drink. As to the quantity so consumed, exact statistics are not necessary for our purpose. We can afford to leave a margin wide enough for all contingencies. On an average of ten years the quantity of barley converted into malt in the United Kingdom has been nearly six millions of quarters annually. When you add to this the unmalted grain consumed in the distillation of spirits in Ireland, you have an aggregate sufficient to feed between four and five millions of people throughout the year.

When I see cart-loads of dirty, brown, reeking rubbish passing along the streets, food for pigs and cattle, I gaze with melancholy interest on the repulsive object. The sight, though few would count it poetical, is more suggestive to my imagination than shady groves at noon, or moonlight on a rippling lake. I think of the yellow waving harvest field which reproduced its seed a hundred-fold —of the labourers who tilled it going home with heavy hearts to their half-fed children—of the *amen* that rose

from many a cushioned pew when the prayer for daily bread was addressed to "our Father in heaven." If the question, "Where is the bread which I have given you?" should now peal in thunder from the throne, this nation must stand speechless, between those bounteous harvest fields on the one hand, and these steaming, fetid heaps of husks which the swine do eat, on the other.

So much we destroy of that which God commands the earth to bring forth for the life of man; and what do we obtain in return? A large quantity of malt liquors and distilled spirits. And is the gain not equivalent, or nearly equivalent, to the loss, in the material means of supporting life? Here lies another deceit:

2. The curative and strengthening properties of our strong drinks, which are so much vaunted, are in reality next to nothing. We except, of course, the infinitesimal proportion of them that is used as medicine. We speak of the ordinary use of these articles as a beverage by the people. A vague but influential notion is abroad that there is a good deal of nourishment in ale and spirits. The evidence of science is distinct and decisive on the other side; but it is not potential on the mind and conduct of the community. Ardent spirits contain no nourishment at all. If they contribute at any time to the quantity of force exerted by man, it corresponds not to the corn which you give to your horse, but to the whipping. A master who has hired you only for a day, and desires to make the most of his bargain, may possibly find it his interest to bring more out of your bones and sinews by such a stimulus; but you certainly

have no interest in lashing an additional effort out of yourself to-day, and lying in lethargy to-morrow. The ardent spirits put nothing in; whatever therefore they take out, is taken from your body. The inevitable consequence is, permanent feebleness and shortened days. Whatever gain it may be to the master, every atom of exertion drawn forth by the stimulant is a dead loss to the man. As to malt liquors the case is different, but the difference is small. When you go down among infinitesimals the calculation is difficult. Our strong drink is eminently a mocker. It successfully deceives the people as to the quantity and the kind of nourishment which it contains. How many gallons of porter an Englishman must drink ere he get into his stomach a quantity of food equal to a loaf of bread, I do not remember, and I fear readers would be incredulous if the figures were set down. Liebig has a pleasant notion about balancing on the point of a pen-knife, like a pinch of snuff, all the nourishment that the most capacious German swallows with his beer in a day. And it is chemistry that he is giving us; not poetry or wit. He is submitting the results of a scientific analysis. But people don't believe the chemists,—at least not with that kind of belief which compels a man to thwart his own appetite. We believe them when they detect by their analysis a few grains of arsenic in an exhumed body, and on the faith of their evidence we hang a man for murder; but we do not believe them when they tell us how little sustenance and how much poison is in our beer. Why? Because we like our beer. It takes a great deal of evidence to convince us, when our

appetite is on the other side. Draymen may be seen in London, belonging to the breweries, living, as it were, at the fountain-head of drink, and showing an imposing bulk of body. If we judge men by the standard applied to fat cattle, they will bear away the prize. But apart from all moral considerations, and looking to the men as machines for doing work, the bulk damages the article. It will not last;—see the tables of mortality. It is not sound; if the skin is scratched, it cannot be healed again. How much better bodies these might have been,—how much better working machines,—if they had eaten as bread the grain which has been destroyed to supply them with porter! How much tougher bodies—how much brighter souls!

3. Strong drink deceives the nation by the vast amount of revenue that it pours into the public treasury. It is a true and wise economy to tax the articles heavily for behoof of the community, as far and as long as they are sold and used; but it is a false and foolish economy to encourage the consumption of the article for the sake of the revenue which it produces. Drink generates pauperism, and pauperism is costly. Drink generates crime, and crime is costly. If the national appetite for stimulants should suddenly cease, and the stream of taxation which constitutes one-third of the imperial revenue should consequently be dried up, a smaller amount of money, no doubt, would pass through the treasury; but we would find it easier to pay our way. A comfortable balance is a healthier thing for a mercantile firm, or an imperial treasury, than mere magnitude of transactions,

where the expenditure is continually threatening to rise above the income. They who are deceived into the belief that strong drink enriches the nation "are not wise."

There is a huge living creature with as many limbs as a Hindoo idol, and these limbs intertwined with each other in equally admired confusion. The creature having life must be fed, and being large must have a great deal of food for its sustenance. One day, having got rather short allowance, it was rolling its heavy head among its many limbs, and felt something warm and fleshy. Being hungry, it made an incision with its teeth, laid its lips to the spot, and sucked. Warm blood came freely: the creature sucked its fill, and, gorged, lay down to sleep. Next day it supplemented its short rations in the same way. Every day the creature drank from that opening, and as this rich draught made up about one-third of its whole sustenance, the wonder grew, why it was becoming weaker under the process from day to day. Some one at last bethought him of turning over the animal's intermingled limbs, and found that all this time it had been sucking its own blood! The discoverer proposed to bandage the spot, and not permit the continuance of the unnatural operation. The financiers cried out, "A third of the animal's sustenance comes from that opening; if you stop it, he will die!"

Behold the wise politicians who imagine that the body politic would die of inanition if it were deprived of the revenue which it sucks from its own veins, in the shape of taxes on the consumption of intoxicating drinks!

4. In as far as human friendship is, in any case, dependent on artificial stimulant for the degree of its fervency, it is a worthless counterfeit. No man who entertains a proper respect for himself will accept the spurious coin in the interchange of social affections. There is another sphere on which the deceiver sometimes operates,—a sphere so high, that I am afraid to follow him thither and contend with him there. I am in a strait betwixt two. I dare not speak it out, lest the very mention of it should offend God's little ones; and I dare not pass it in silence, lest some unwise brother should stumble into the snare for want of the timely warning. The priests of Israel were expressly prohibited from tasting wine or strong drink before they approached the altar (Lev. x. 9). When the redeemed of the Lord—a spiritual priesthood all—enter into the Holiest through the blood of Christ, no spark of strange fire should be permitted in any degree to add intensity to the flame of their emotions.

5. Perhaps, after all, the chief deception practised by strong drink on the community lies in the silent, stealthy advances which it makes upon the unsuspecting taster, followed, when the secret approaches have been carried to a certain point, by the sure spring and relentless death-gripe of the raging lion who goes about amongst us seeking whom he may devour. All are not so deceived into drunkenness: the majority are not so deceived. If they were, the vessel of the State would soon go down bodily. Even as it is, the drunkards, a sweltering inert mass of brutalized humanity, lie so heavy in her hold, that a practised eye may observe a sickly stagger as she yet boldly

breasts the wave. How came all these into that condition of shame and wretchedness? Ask these many thousands of mindless, pithless, hopeless inebriates—ask them one by one; they will all tell, and tell truly, that they did not intend to sink into that condition, but sank into it beyond recovery ere they were aware of danger. You are strong; you feel your footing firm: so did they. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." This Bible warns you that wine is a mocker. The warning applies with greatly augmented force to us. I implore the reader to observe that the caution to the sober, to beware of the deceiving, insnaring power of strong drink, is not the alarm of an enthusiast, but the word of the living God.

A deceiver is in the midst of us. He has many strongholds in our streets: he has free access to our homes. His victims are many; and his treatment of them is merciless. Like the old serpent, he fastens his chains always by guile, never by violence. His professions are friendly, and his approaches slow. He touches the taste, and pleases it: he is therefore invited to return. Every time he is admitted to the tongue he sends along the nerves to the brain an influence, as secret as the electric current along the wire, and as sure. The effect is distinctly felt each time, but it seems to go off soon. It does not all go off, however. Something remains, invisible, it may be, as the effects of light at first on the photographer's plate, but real, and ready to come out with awful distinctness at a succeeding stage. When the brain is frequently exposed to the comings and goings of these impressions, silent and

secret as rays of light penetrating the camera, it acquires imperceptibly the susceptibility which an accident any day may develop into an incurable disease. Considering the power of this deceiver,—considering the number around us who are deceived thereby,—considering the wondrous delicacy and susceptibility of the human brain,—considering that in this life the soul can neither learn nor act except through the brain, as its organ,—considering that strong drink goes by a secret postern direct into the presence-chamber of the soul,—considering the satanic malignity with which it holds the struggling victim,—considering how few of those who have fallen into this pit have ever risen again, and how tenderly God's word warns us not to venture near its slippery brim,—surely it is the part of wisdom to lean hard over to the safer side. Brother! your immortal soul is embodied in flesh. You have in that body only one organ through which the soul can act, either in getting from God or serving him. That organ is refined and delicate beyond the power of words to express. If its eye is dimmed and its feeling blunted, your soul has lost its only avenue of access to the Saviour. As you hope to see God, beware of those mists that cloud the vision of the soul. As you hope to feel a Redeemer's love softly embracing you in a dying hour, beware of those drops that have turned so many hearts into stone.



XX.

THE SLUGGARD SHALL COME TO WANT.

"The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing."—xx. 4.

THE reproof of slothfulness often recurs: we may safely infer that it was a besetting sin in the Hebrew commonwealth. It is a vice to which primitive and pastoral communities, other things being equal, are more liable than merchants and artisans. You may expect to find more of it in the Scottish Highlands than on the wharves of Liverpool, or in the mills of Manchester. As a general rule, it is not the weak side of the Anglo-Saxon race. Our history and position in the world prove that we possess in large measure the counterpart virtue. Other vices thrive on our busy industry, like parasites upon living creatures; but it cannot be said that we are nationally a slothful people.

Individual instances of sloth, however, occur amongst us; all the more inexcusable because of the industry which abounds. Short and sure is the process by which the sluggard's sin finds the sluggard out. If he does not plough, he cannot reap. If he is idle in the seed-time, he will be hungry in the harvest. The very alphabet of providential retribution is here. The simplest may read the law when it is written in letters so large, and so fully exposed to the light. We submit to the law as inevitable;

and wherever reason is even moderately enlightened, we acquiesce in the law as just and good. No man who neglects his field in spring complains that it does nothing for him in autumn. We all know that such the law is, and most of us secretly feel that such it should be.

God's system of government is not to work for man, but to supply him with the means of working for himself. He gives rain from heaven; but if we do not till and sow on earth, our fields will not be fruitful, our hearts will not be glad. He gives seed, but he gives it to the sower. Riches without limit are stored in His treasuries, but only the hand of the diligent can draw them forth. No man expects a different arrangement of the providential laws, and no wise man desires it. It is better for man, as man now is, that he is placed in circumstances to win his bread by the sweat of his brow, than if bread had dropped into his lap from heaven, or sprung spontaneously from the earth. Our Father has graciously turned the very curse into a blessing. The rod that was lifted in anger to smite the alien, descends as discipline to correct the child.

There is a silent submission to the law, if not an intelligent acquiescence in its propriety. All our habits of acting are formed in accordance with it. A poor man honestly seeking work is everywhere respected: a sturdy beggar clamouring for alms is everywhere despised. The common sense of men falls in with the express injunction of the gospel, that he who will not work should not be allowed to eat (2 Thess. iii. 10).

This principle lies deep in the nature of things, and pervades every department of the divine government. Its

operation is as sure and uniform in morals as in matter. The Scriptures frequently employ the physical facts as types wherewith to print off for learners the spiritual law. May "He that ministereth seed to the sower, increase the fruits of your righteousness," is Paul's prayer for the Corinthians when he longed for their growth in grace (2 Cor. ix. 10). He knew that God would give it; but he knew also that it would be given only as the increase of the field is given. Writing at another time to the same people, he says, "We are labourers together with God; ye are God's husbandry" (1 Cor. iii. 9). True, the Author and Finisher of their faith will not leave them in the greatest of all matters to their own resources. God works in concert with men for their good; but he works in a special department and within well-defined limits. He is a fellow-worker in promoting their spiritual progress, but it is as he co-operates with men in their "husbandry." He does not relieve the husbandman from tilling. God is a fellow-worker in giving him rain from heaven; but if he does not till and sow he will beg in harvest, although the Almighty offers to be his partner in the work. Such is the law by which the husbandry of the heart is regulated. The promise, sufficient, yet not redundant, is, "Their soul shall be as a watered garden" (Jer. xxxi. 12). Notwithstanding the promise of an omnipotent co-operator, the garden well watered by the rain of heaven will be a fruitless waste if it be not tilled, fenced, sown, weeded. This is no abatement from the worth of the promise or the kindness of the Promiser. If He should so work with men, either in spirit or in matter, as that the fruit would

be sure independently of the husbandman's labour, all distinctions between good and evil would be lost and government become impossible.

He is in this husbandry a fellow-worker; the industrious cannot fail: but He works only in his own department; the lazy cannot succeed. Your soul is the garden: it need not lie barren, for He will water; but it will lie barren, if you do not work.

The watered field will fill no man's bosom in the harvest if it be not *tilled* in spring. "Break up your fallow ground" (Jer. iv. 3). When the heart is beaten hard by troops of worldly cares treading constantly over it, and not broken up or made small by exercises of self-examination and godly sorrow, the seed does not go beneath the surface, and, so far from reaping a golden harvest, you never see even the promises of spring. But although the field be tilled and broken from its depths, the labour will be unprofitable if it be *sown* with tares or not sown at all. "The seed is the word;" and ourselves are the field to be cultivated. Put the good seed plentifully in. Hide the word in your heart diligently, hopefully, as the husbandman commits his precious seed to the ground. If we do not sow our own field, how shall we help to sow the field of our neighbour? Even a tilled and sown field may be rendered in a great measure unproductive for want of *fences*. If it be left exposed to every comer, its early sprouting will be trampled under foot, and the hopes which it kindled will be quenched in tears. If men would treat their souls as carefully as they treat their fields, all would be well. Draw defences round your



soul: keep out those who would cruelly or carelessly tread down the buds of beginning grace. Leave not your heart open, like an exposed common, to the reckless tread of promiscuous passers. Tempters, like wild boars of the woods, prowl round about your garden: ward them resolutely off; keep it for the Master and his friends. Further still: the tilled, sown, fenced garden, may be overrun with *weeds*, and the full-grown fruit be choked before it reach the ripening. In the garden of your soul weeds spring up without any sowing. Unless you labour daily to keep them down, they will gain upon the good seed and overtop it. As a man who loves his garden may be seen stooping down every now and then in his daily walk through it to pluck out and cast over the wall each weed that meets his eye as it is struggling through the ground; so a man that loves his soul and would fain see it flourishing, is ever on the watch for malice and envy and falsehood, and vanity and pride and covetousness,—for any and for all of the legion-species of bitter roots that are ever springing up, troubling himself and defiling his neighbours (Heb. xii. 15). They that are Christ's have crucified, and all their life long continue to crucify, their own lusts.

All these efforts for the garden will be useless if it is not watered: but, on the other hand, the plentiful watering of the garden with rain from heaven will not make it fruitful if any of these operations are neglected. These operations lie to our hand. God works with us, indeed, but he will not perform for us these works. He co-operates by giving us refreshing rain, and commands

us to meet his gift by our industrious labour. He does for a soul what he does for a garden. It shall be watered. The grace of the Spirit shall not be wanting; yet, in the spiritual husbandry, the sluggard who will not plough shall not reap.

Not having any ripened grain to reap, he falls a-begging when the harvest comes: "Lord, Lord, open to us." But it is too late. The Lord does not give at that time, and in that way. He will give seed to the sower in spring, but not alms to the sluggard in harvest. He gave seed and rain, and saw them wasted. He pleaded with men to accept and use them, and they would not. At last, when they plead with him, he will not. In an accepted time they would not take the seed: in a rejecting time they cry for the fruit of eternal life, and are sent empty away. Alas! the sluggard begs in harvest, "and has nothing." His soul was the only real treasure that he ever had, and now it is lost.



XXI.

WISDOM MODEST, FOLLY OBTRUSIVE.

"Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water: but a man of understanding will draw it out. Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?"—xx. 5, 6.

HERE are two twin misfortunes from which mankind suffer much,—the retiring bashfulness of true worth, and the chattering forwardness of empty self-esteem. The man who has something which would do good to his fellows, is apt to keep it within himself: the man who has nothing solid, is continually giving forth sound. The wisdom which we value we cannot obtain, for it lies in the heart of a modest man like water at the bottom of a deep well: the folly of which we are weary we cannot escape, for it babbles spontaneously from the fool's tongue on the crowded thoroughfares of the world. It would be a double benefit to society if the one man could be persuaded to say more, and the other to say less. In the heart of that man there is "counsel;" but it is like deep water, and "a man of understanding" is required to draw it out. On the lips of this man is vain-glory, which bursts out unbidden; and a "faithful man" is needed to keep it in. Who amongst us has not groaned under these afflictions, either separately or both together? Who has not felt, alternately or simultaneously, the counterpart twin desires, that the fountains of this wise heart

were opened and the mouth of that fool shut? The two kindred sufferings generate two kindred desires; and these two desires should make us expert in the two useful arts of drawing out the good in conversation and keeping in the frivolous.

1. **How to draw out the good.** "Counsel in the heart of a man is like deep water: but a man of understanding will draw it out." Some men have the root of the matter within them, but no tendency spontaneously to give it out. Constitutional timidity, or the grace of modesty, or both combined, may shut in any company the wisest lips. A stone lies on the well's mouth, and a man of understanding is the Jacob who rolls it off, that all the circle may draw and drink. It is a touching picture, and represents a frequently-recurring fact in actual life. A man who is at once wise and modest is compared to a deep well. Although a supply of water is within, neighbours may walk round the brim and get no refreshing, because it is deep and still. This is not a rare case. The conversation in a company is often frivolous, although the company is not destitute of solid, well-charged minds. When no one has skill to draw out the wisdom of the wise, the folly of the fools will rush out without any drawing, and inundate the circle. It is not to be expected that men of solid gifts will spontaneously exert themselves to bring out their treasures and press their instructions on unwilling ears. A righteous man may here and there be found so ardent in his love, and so zealous of good works, that his mouth is like "a well of life" (x. 11), spontaneously pouring forth a perennial



stream; but many real wells are of the deep, still sort, which keep their water within themselves, until some one draw it out. There is a certain sensitiveness which often seals up within a man not only the treasures of useful information, but also the graces of the Spirit. He who has the tact to wait his opportunity, and gently draw the covering aside, and touch the vein, and make the treasures flow, has conferred, by a single stroke, a double benefit,—one on the company for whom, and another on the individual from whom, the instruction has been drawn. When water is drawn from a deep well, the thirsty who stand round its brim enjoy the benefit; but an advantage accrues also to the well itself. When much is drawn out the circulation sweetens the supply, and leaves it as large as before. One who values time, and watches for opportunities of improving it, may be as useful to society by drawing "counsel" out of others as by giving it himself.

2. How to repress the worthless. "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness; but a faithful man who can find?" This humiliating description is more literally true, and more extensively applicable, than we in the present artificial state of society are able to perceive. There is so much of politeness on the surface, that it is exceedingly difficult to estimate how much of real humility exists in the heart. Polish is a picture of grace, and pictures skilfully painted sometimes look very like life. Among uncivilized tribes or little children, the reality is more easily seen. Unsophisticated nature, when it has a good opinion of itself, frankly declares it. The complicated forms of refined society supply convenient

folds where the sentiment which cannot creditably be confessed may be prudently concealed. To cover vain-glory under a web of soft phraseology is not the same as to crucify the lusts of the flesh. "This poor, worthless effort of mine," may in secret mean, "This great achievement which I have successfully accomplished." We would not, however, discard the idiom of modesty which refinement has infused into our speech; it is often true, and always comely. It is not that we love the garb of humility less, but its living body more.

It is easy to find a man who will proclaim his own goodness, but a faithful man, who will keep down such egotism, is more needful and more rare. This faithfulness, where it exists, develops itself in two branches, the one suppressing our neighbour's vanity and the other our own. The last mentioned is first in the order of nature, and in relative importance the chief. True faithfulness, like charity, begins at home. If you do not first successfully crush your own self-esteem, your efforts to do that service for others will provoke laughter or kindle wrath. Faithful reproof of another's foibles is a virtue which some can exercise without an effort. They deal a hearty blow on the head of a luckless brother egotist who stands in the way of their own advancement, and then expect to be praised for faithfulness. But it is Jehu's driving. The zeal which impels it is not pure. It is a spurious faithfulness that spares self-esteem at home and smites it abroad.

Most proclaim their own goodness; but a faithful man who can find? The ailment is prevalent, the remedy

rare. But if faithfulness is seldom found, it is precious in proportion to its scarcity. When it is of the true, solid, authoritative kind, loquacious vain-glory flees before it like smoke before the wind. You may have seen a mighty boaster, self-constituted sole monarch in the centre of a gaping crowd, quenched in a moment by the entrance of one honest man who knew him. An honest man is indeed a noble work of God, and a useful member of the commonwealth. Happy is the society that possesses a few tall enough to be visible over all its surface, and stern enough to scare away the vermin of empty boasters that prey upon its softer parts.

A consistent Christian is, after all, the best style of man. A steady faith in the unseen is the safest guide through the shifting sands of things seen and temporal. When a man's treasure is in heaven, he is not under the necessity of courting popular applause. Those who have truly humbled themselves before God, experience no inclination falsely to magnify themselves in the sight of men.

XXII.

TWO WITNESSES—THE HEARING EAR AND THE SEEING EYE.

"The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them."—xx. 12.

Two witnesses, the hearing ear and the seeing eye, are summoned forth to prove before the world that the Maker of all things is wise and good. These two palm branches, ever green, plaited into a simple wreath, are chosen from the whole earth as a diadem of glory for the Sovereign's brow. These words so gently spoken, these works so wonderfully made, challenge for their Author the homage and service of all intelligent created beings.

It is a well-known fact in human experience, that the nearer wonders are to the observer, and the oftener they occur, the less wonderful they seem to be. Perhaps the most powerful practical fallacy in life is to confound things that are common with things that are of little value. The counterpart and complement of this error is, to esteem a thing in proportion to its distance and rarity. Bread and water, light and air, are lightly esteemed and ungratefully wasted by those who would pass a sleepless night if a little sparkling stone were stolen or lost. God's word invites us to consider his works. He takes it ill when we blindly overlook the wisdom and goodness with which they are charged.

"This famous town of MANSOUL had *five gates*, in at

which to come, out at which to go; and these were made likewise answerable to the walls,—to wit, impregnable, and such as could never be opened nor forced but by the will and leave of those within. The names of the gates were these:—Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate, Nose-gate, and Feel-gate." The reader will recognise in the picture John Bunyan's hand, although his name is not inscribed on the corner of the canvass. The ear and the eye are the two chief gateways through which the human soul, in its imperial palace, receives its knowledge from heaven or earth. They are suitable specimens of divine workmanship, for being submitted to the inspection and employed in the instruction of men.

The ear and eye are curious instruments fixed in the outer walls of the bodily frame, for receiving impressions from sound and light, and conveying corresponding sensations to the mind.*

The ear, as a complex mechanical apparatus, lies almost wholly within the body and beyond our sight: only a wide outer porch through which the sound enters is exposed to view. The mechanism within, like that of all the corporeal organs, exhibits abundant evidence of contrivance exerted intelligently with a view to a specific end. The sound passing successively through a suite of chambers each appropriately furnished, touches in the innermost the extremities of the nerves which bear the message to the brain. The eye, though more easily observed, is scarcely more wonderful in its structure, adap-

* See a most interesting and instructive little treatise on the *Five Gateways of Knowledge*, by Professor George Wilson of the University of Edinburgh.

tations, and uses. It is a window in the wall of this house of clay, without which it would be comparatively a dark and dreary dwelling for the soul. It is supplied with a machinery in the form of eye-lids for washing and wiping the glass all day long, so that the window may never be dusty. It has an opening for receiving rays of light, which enlarges itself spontaneously when the light is scarce, in order to take in much; and contracts itself spontaneously when the light is plentiful, in order that less may be admitted. It has transparent lenses like a telescope, through which the rays pass; and a white curtain on its inmost wall, like a camera, on which the pictures of external objects are painted. Into that canvass from behind nerves are introduced like electric wires, through which the soul receives in her presence-chamber instant intimation of all that is going on without. Sun pictures of the outer world were taken instantaneously upon a prepared plate, by an instrument of small bulk which a man can carry about with him, long before the invention of photograph. Inventors are only discoverers of what already is, and has from the beginning been. They are hounds of keener scent, who track the secret footsteps of nature more stanchly than their neighbours; and nature is nothing else than the method by which it pleases God to carry on his work. The rule applied to religion, is in its very terms strictly applicable also to art, "Be ye imitators of God, as dear children."

The adaptation of each organ to its object, presents an additional evidence of wise design, perhaps even stronger than that which the mechanism of the instrument supplies.



The ear would be nothing without sound. The eye, with all its curious and exact machinery, would be an elaborate abortion if light were not, or were subject to different laws. Whatever evidence of beneficent design may lie separately in the seeing eye and the shining light, it is multiplied a thousand-fold by the perfect reciprocal adaptation which subsists between them.

Philosophy has long puzzled its disciples with questions regarding the reality of the external world. Seeing that the human mind does not come directly in contact with earth and air and sea, but only receives pictures or notions of them through the organs of sensation, a doubt has been raised whether substances corresponding to these pictures have any real existence. As the picture of an object is not sufficient evidence that the object exists, it has been said, Sensations of the external world, which are only pictures conveyed to the brain through the senses, do not certainly prove that the external world really is. This question, though in itself an interesting one, is scarcely entitled to rank higher than a plaything. It is useful in calling our attention to the means by which we obtain a knowledge of things beyond ourselves, but it has not power to throw the slightest shade of uncertainty over the existence of these things. The eye and the ear are the chief instruments by which we ascertain the existence and qualities of external objects, and God is the maker of them both. For that very use he framed them and gave them to his creatures; and he has done all things well. There are no deceptions in his plan, and no blunders in its execution.

Besides, our belief in the existence of things is con-

firmed by the mouth of many independent witnesses. To each object several of the senses, and to many all, bear concurrent testimony. The eye and the ear do not act in concert. They are as independent of each other as any two witnesses that ever gave evidence in a trial. If the eye should give a false testimony, the ear would correct it. To suppose that all the senses were made for telling lies, and corroborating each other in their falsehood, is at once to magnify the wonders of the contrivance, and ascribe it to Satan instead of God. These gateways of knowledge were pierced in the body by its Maker's own hand, that the soul might not sit darkling within its house of clay. The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them. He, into whose hands believers commit the keeping of their souls, is "a faithful Creator" (1 Peter iv. 19).

On this subject, and in this point of view, the Popish doctrine of transubstantiation possesses a peculiar interest. We look at it in its philosophical rather than its religious aspect. It comes across our path here, not as a perversion of the word, but as a dishonour done to the works of God. Our cause of quarrel with it in this place is, that it pours contempt on the seeing eye, which the Lord has made and given to his creatures.

The belief, inculcated and professed throughout the mysterious spiritual commonwealth of Rome, that the bread and wine in the sacrament of the Supper are changed at the utterance of the consecrating word, and are no longer bread and wine, but the body and blood of Christ, is a great feature in the working of the human

mind, and a great fact in the history of the human race. It sprung up in a dark age, and was irrevocably incorporated in a system which professes itself infallible and dares not change. The dogma of transubstantiation could not be cast out when an age of light returned, because to lose the prestige of immutability would be more destructive to Rome than to retain a belief which places her in contradiction to the laws of nature and the senses of men. Accordingly they retain it, and, with impudence on the one side, and ignorance on the other, manage to keep their heads above water in some way, notwithstanding the weight and awkwardness of their burden.

This doctrine brings the huge bulk of Popery right across the path on which we are now advancing. They teach that what I taste and see to be bread and wine, is not bread and wine at all, but the flesh and blood and bones of a human body,—the very body that was nailed to the cross on Calvary! They thereby repudiate the testimony of the senses, competently given, and disparage the work and gift of God. They concede that the senses, in as far as they give, or can give, a testimony on the subject, report the elements to be bread and wine; but affirm that the senses are not in all cases trust-worthy, and specify cases in which erroneous inferences are sometimes drawn from the impressions of a single sense. Suppose we should commence the controversy on the other side, by showing that their position proves too much, and cuts away the ground on which they stand:—If the senses deceive, how can I be sure that my ear conveys to me the words of the priest? Under this pressure

they select the sense of hearing, and affirm that it may be trusted, and it alone. The senses of seeing, tasting, smelling, and feeling, all take cognizance of the object, and all concur in representing it to be bread. The sense of hearing does not take cognizance of the object at all, and has no testimony to give. And this one they select as the only one that should be trusted! Five witnesses are called to give evidence regarding a certain fact. The question, "Were you present?" is put successively to all the five. The first four answer, Yes; the last one, No. The next question is, "Did the prisoner commit the deed?" The first four answer, Yes; the last one answers, No. The jury return a verdict of acquittal. But they are perjured men. They have a purpose to serve. They have believed one witness who was not present, against four witnesses who were. Such is the state of the case when contemplated in the abstract, but it becomes much clearer and stronger when we refer to examples in Scripture.

After his resurrection, and before he ascended to heaven, Jesus showed himself alive, "by many infallible proofs," to the apostles whom he had chosen (Acts i. 3). And what were the proofs which he gave? The evidence of the senses, and that alone;—"being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." It was the evidence of sight and hearing. When the resurrection of Christ—the fact on which the world's redemption hangs—is to be proved, the hearing ear and the seeing eye are the two witnesses called to support it. They are competent and true, for "the Lord hath made even both of them." The evidence of the

senses is either sufficient proof of a fact, or it is not. If it is sufficient, transubstantiation is not true, for the senses testify against it: if it is not sufficient, the resurrection of Christ is not proved, for it has no other evidence to rest on. Thus the foundation of a believer's hope and the foundation of the Popish system cannot both stand: thus is Popery proved to be Antichrist.

In this place, however, we enter the lists against that mysterious power, expressly in defence of the hearing ear and the seeing eye as the good gifts of a true God. He counts their evidence sure, for he has made it a link of the chain on which his great salvation leans, when it is let down to men. Through these inlets comes to us the knowledge, not only of earth, but also of heaven; not only of time, but also of eternity. It is by seeing and hearing that the word enters a believing heart; and the entrance of the word giveth life. The word, coming in and abiding, is life—life for evermore. He that hath the Son hath life.

Man and his faculties are spoken of in Scripture as vessels or instruments, wherewith God works out his plans. Paul was a "chosen vessel" for containing and bearing to the nations Christ's name (Acts ix. 15). The Romans were enjoined to yield not only themselves in general, but specifically their "members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. vi. 13). He honours his own work in our bodies, although we blindly despise and abuse it. These eyes and ears which he has made, are, as instruments, worthy of his wisdom. They are capable of useful employment in his service. It is

breach of trust to use them in another and adverse interest.

The Omniscient is not bound to us and the organs of our body for the accomplishment of his plans. With or without us, he will do all his pleasure. It is our surest safety to be on his side—our greatest honour to be employed as his instruments. The world which he works in is full of the tools which he works with. In trees and plants, every thorn and leaf and tendril is a cunningly-contrived instrument fitted to conduct some delicate operation in the vegetable economy. In animals, every member of the body is a tool. The work-shop is full of materials and implements. Again, every part of creation is an instrument necessary and suitable for some department of the universal work. The internal fires of the globe are machinery for heaving up the mountain ridges, and causing the intervening valleys to subside. The clouds are capacious vessels made for carrying water from its great reservoir to the thirsty land. The rivers are a vast water-power in perpetual motion, slowly wearing down the mountains, and spreading the debris in layers on the bottom of the sea. The sun is an instrument for lighting and warming the world, and the earth's huge bulk a curtain for screening off the sunlight at stated intervals, and so giving to weary workers a grateful night of rest. Chief of all the instruments for the Master's use is man, made last, made best,—broken, disfigured, and defiled by sin, but capable yet, when redeemed and renewed, of becoming a vessel for conveying God's goodness down to creation, and creation's praises articulate up to God.

In our religious exercises we must not limit our view to the soul and its sins, so as to neglect the body and its organs; for, in acts of sin or of holiness, the body is related to the soul as the moving machinery to the water-stream which drives it. In spiritual matters we are accustomed to think with something like contempt of the senses and their organs. There is some risk of error and loss at this point. It is true that we deserve contempt when we waste them on vanity or cripple them by vice. But these members are worthy of their Maker. They are given to us for the noblest purposes. They are given in trust. We should highly esteem the talent, and diligently occupy it till the Giver come. He is not ashamed to own that hearing ear and that seeing eye as his. He who spread out the heavens, and sprinkled them with sparkling worlds, points to these members of our bodies as specimens that will sustain his glory. How warily should they walk upon the world who bear about with them these precious and tender jewels, the cherished property of the great King! How carefully should we preserve from pollution these delicate instruments, to which he is even now pointing as evidence of his skill and kindness!

Christian! these ears and eyes are the openings whereby light and life have reached your soul; occupy them henceforth with sounds and sights that will please Him. If I am Christ's, these ears and eyes have been bought for himself by the price of his own blood. I must not employ them to crucify him afresh, and bring him to an open shame. Let me listen to those sounds and look at those sights which I would listen to and look at if he

stood beside me listening and looking too. To other sounds let me be deaf,—to other beauties blind.

The subject is not a little one. Issues inconceivably great depend on the purposes to which we now apply these good gifts of God. Our time and our eternity both depend on their use or abuse. The conflict rages now: the victory will be decided soon. Through their ears and eyes disciples, like their Lord, are plied with strong temptations. To them as to him the kingdoms of the world and their glory are offered, on the same dark condition. Sin waves its painted beauties and shakes its music-bells to win and enslave. Through unwary ears and eyes the adversary enters to drag the soul into captivity and death.

Hark! another voice! Behold another sight! "Hear, and your souls shall live." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Hear these words of life: behold that Lamb of God who taketh sin away. By these openings, which his own hand has made into our being, God our Saviour will send in light and life.

Soon these ears and eyes will be closed for ever against earthly sounds and sights; but they will open again for other entrants. The trumpet shall sound, and every ear shall hear it. "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth." Nor shall the world's destiny be pronounced by an invisible Judge. He shall come as the lightning comes, and every eye shall see him; they also who pierced him. The voice of judgment will penetrate the ear that was deaf to the

message of mercy. The outcast will have an ear to hear, but no word of hope will ever reach it: an eye to see, but no light will ever dawn to meet its straining.

Let my ears now hear the word, and my eyes behold the beauty of the Lord: then, at his appointed time, let them close in peace. When next they open, they shall see and hear, what eye hath not seen nor ear heard as yet,—"the things that God hath prepared for them that love him."

XXIII.

BUYERS AND SELLERS.

"It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."—xx. 14.

A VERY large proportion of man's intercourse with man is occupied by the acts of buying and selling. Nation buys from nation separated by the sea,—citizen from citizen separated by a street. In the progress of civilization the commercial relations of states are gradually rising above the political in importance and power. Fleets and armies may, by a sudden blow, derange the course of commerce for a time, but its accumulated waters soon acquire a momentum sufficient to carry away all artificial impediments, and clear or make a channel for themselves. The many rivulets of domestic trade obey the same laws as the majestic rivers of international commerce. Buying and selling on every scale, from the pennyworth of the poor widow to the precious cargo of a merchant prince, have in time past flowed like rivers, and like them will continue to flow. It is not in the power of men to stop or turn either class of streams. Those circulations that are necessary to the world's well-being are placed by the almighty Ruler beyond the reach of man's capricious will and meddling hands. Neither our own body nor the body of the earth is dependent on our thoughtfulness for the flow and reflow of its life-blood. In like manner,

though in measure less complete, commerce holds direct of the universal Lawgiver, and spurns the behests of parliaments and kings. It determines its reservoirs in the interior, traces its own channel along the plain, curving now to this side and now to that without giving an account of its ways, and at last chooses its own outlet on the ocean. Each of these circulations maintains a life after its kind; and it is good for man that, alike in the momentum of their flow and the degree of their occasional deflection, they obey other laws than his.

The chief effort of the first Napoleon, in the latter years of the great war, was to intercept the flow of commerce into Britain by his celebrated Continental System, and so compel us to capitulate, like a garrison whose supply of water is cut off. The scheme failed, notwithstanding the vast resources employed in its behalf, and the extraordinary energy with which it was prosecuted. The commerce of nations is of the nature and dimensions of a mighty river,—no embankments made by man can arrest its course. The increase of commerce in our day is a happy omen for the future of the race. Next to the spread of the Truth in power, buying and selling are the best antidotes to the spirit and practice of war.

The passing and repassing of merchandise through some of the greater arteries of the world's commerce is a sight eminently fitted to arrest and occupy alike the imagination, the intellect, and the heart. The stream of carts and trucks and boats through the heart of a great commercial emporium, is as sublime as rushing rivers or floating clouds. Through its prosaic crust the true poet's

eye can see a pure and healthful current witnessing the beneficence of God and bearing blessings to men. Some silly people of other countries have sneered at Britain as a nation of merchants. They may as well sneer at the waters which bear our merchandise, or the winds which waft it on. We could sit easy under the taunts of strangers for the quantity of our buying and selling, if we had no cause to reproach ourselves on account of its character. The nation's trade is the nation's honour; the dishonest tricks that mingle with it constitute in that matter our real, our only disgrace. Commerce is a noble occupation,—be it ours to keep its mighty current pure.

Looking now to the exchange of commodities in its minuter details, it occupies in a very large proportion the time and attention of neighbours when they meet. Let a farmer, for example, take in this light a note of a week's transactions. He will find that most of his meetings and conversations were connected with buying or selling. On the one hand are a numerous class from whom he obtains his supplies by purchase; and, on the other, a smaller class to whom in larger transactions he disposes of his produce by sale. His business with each is a bargain. The community is not divided into two classes,—one of buyers and another of sellers. The interests of all are much more completely interwoven than would be possible under such an arrangement. Each class and each individual is a buyer and seller by turns. He who sells bread buys clothes, and he who sells clothes buys bread. This intermixture binds society together. It is in some measure analogous to the chemical admix-

ture of constituents which secures the solidity and cohesion of stones or timber.

Buying and selling, then, constitute in a great measure the point of contact for individuals as the particles which make up society in the mass; and it is of the utmost importance that there should be softness and cohesiveness, not hardness and repulsion, on both sides at the meeting-place. If suspicion and dishonesty prevail there, the peace of each will be marred, and the strength of the whole diminished. Truth and trustfulness will bind us into one, and union is strength. The soundest commonwealth is a commonwealth of honest men.

Throughout the Proverbs reproofs frequently occur directed expressly against the unjust balances of the dishonest seller: the sentence now before us uncovers the disingenuous pretences of the untruthful buyer. The blame of existing evils does not all lie at the seller's door. Allowing, for the moment, that he is guilty of all the tricks which the public so readily and so indiscriminately impute to him, the question remains, To what extent did the community of buyers, by their own tortuous conduct, produce in the seller the vice by which they suffer and of which they complain? The case by its very nature precludes the possibility of a precise analysis, but perhaps we would not greatly err if we should assume, in a general way, that nearly half of the mischief belongs to the buyer.

The counts of the indictment against the seller are numerous and varied, but the one with which we are more immediately concerned here is,—He asks for his

article a larger price than it is fairly worth, and if he cannot get what he first demands, he will sell it at a much lower price, rather than not sell it at all. Well, this is your complaint: assuming it to be true, and not justifying his conduct, we raise the other question,—How far are you, the buyers, guilty of inoculating the sellers with that vice?

By expecting dishonesty in the seller, you produce it. The piece of goods is displayed and examined. You desire to purchase it, and ask the price. If from your knowledge of the article you think it too high, and determine not to give so much, it is perfectly competent and fair to offer a lower price. But when you demand an abatement, simply in order to bring the seller down, not based on a judgment as to the worth of the goods, you endanger both his conscience and your own. This kind of demand will be made upon the seller equally whether he asks at first ten shillings for the article or five. It is not a legitimate judgment regarding the bargain at all, but a morbid appetite to bring down the price. This occurs not once or twice, but many times every day. Conceive yourself in the seller's place. This blind and uniform demand for an abatement presses upon him from successive customers, like the continuity of a stream. He perceives that the people who make it are not competent to form an opinion on the value of the goods. He perceives that their aim is to bring him down from the price which he has first announced, whatever it may be. He perceives that the satisfaction of the buyer is not regulated by the real advantage of his bargain, but by the

difference between the price that was first asked and that which was ultimately accepted. The pressure thus brought to bear upon the seller to turn him aside from the line of righteousness is very strong. It is true he ought to withstand the pressure; but it is also true that his customers ought not to subject him to its dreadful strain. If he yields to the temptation, his method is short and easy: he asks a higher price than the goods are worth, and then pleases the purchaser by letting it down.

The cunning buyer, when the price is named, addresses himself vigorously to the work of depreciating the article. Proceeding by rhyme rather than by reason, he reiterates some unvarying formula, like that which the text has preserved in a fossil state since Solomon's day,—"It is naught, it is naught." When he has kept the dealer under the clack of this mill for a sufficient length of time, he offers a price, perhaps the half or two-thirds of that which was at first demanded. His offer is accepted: he shoulders his prize, believes the goods are excellent and cheap, and goes home chuckling over his achievement. He imagines he has circumvented the dealer. The dealer, being one degree more cunning, has circumvented him. At every step of this miserable process, buyer and seller are fellow-sinners, and fellow-sufferers. If the public say to the merchant, Ask only one price, and we will cease to beat down; the merchant may reply to the public, Cease to beat down and I will ask only one price. Trust begets honesty, and honesty begets trust.

We are well aware that the art of higgling is in a great measure antiquated now. The mine has been well-nigh wrought out, and the diggers are trying other veins. The old, base, undisguised see-saw process of knaves and fools going into each other, the one asking a double price, and the other pleased with a bad bargain because he has screwed it down, has fallen now into the lower and more vulgar strata of commercial life. In the higher spheres of trade, sellers and buyers alike would be ashamed in the present day to begin, in this form, the reciprocating series of deceit. I rejoice over the advancement which has been made. I believe that a large proportion of it is a real gain, and is due to the diffusion of sound principles. I am not so sanguine, however, as to believe that the root of the evil has been destroyed. When the more healthful public opinion of the age prevents it from sending forth its branches in one direction, it will push them out in another. The forms of its manifestation will vary with time and circumstances, but a great amount of distrust and dishonesty, reciprocally generating each other, still hangs over the border line where men meet to make bargains, rendering it a comparatively waste and withered region—a region where grace finds it hard to live and grow.

In the days when England and Scotland were rival kingdoms, and their barbarous peoples animated by hereditary feuds, a traveller found, as he neared the border on either side, a wide, uncultivated, unproductive territory. The soil was as generous, and the sky over-head as fair, as in other portions of the country; but the inhabitants on either side occupied themselves with alternate raids, and

each ruthlessly devastated his neighbour's land. The two parties contrived to make matters nearly equal one year with another. The balance was kept even by the impartial desolation of both. At this day, too, the interests of English and Scotch on both sides of the border line are maintained on a footing of perfect equality. Neither obtains any advantage over the other: yet waving corn-fields touch the separating rivulet on either brim. There is no belt of barrenness. The labour of our forefathers in fighting against each other was more than lost. Peace can make neighbours equal as well as war, and give them all their crops beside.

A state of warfare makes a barren border. Mutual suspicion between buyer and seller makes the two equal by wasting both. Trust on the one side and Truth on the other would make bargaining morally as pleasant and profitable as any other exercise in life. Righteousness at the point of contact would do for the parties what peace on the border has done for contiguous kingdoms: it would at once weld the two into one, and preserve intact the interests of each.

Might the analogy be pursued yet another step? The shortest and surest way of preventing a devastating hostility on the borders, is to imbue the hearts of the borderers on both sides with loving loyalty to one rightful King. When independent and hostile tribes are brought under complete subjection to the prince, they cease to wage war against each other. Those who are under law to Christ, will not try to overreach their neighbours in a bargain.

XXIV.

A GOOD NAME.

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold."—xxii. 1.

We are not good judges of value, in the public market of life. We make grievous mistakes, both in choosing and refusing. We often throw away the pearl, and carefully keep the shell. Besides the great disparity in value between the things of heaven and the things of earth, some even of these earthly things are of greater worth than others. The valuables in both ends of this balance belong to time; and yet there is room for a choice between them. There is a greater and a less, where neither is the greatest.

A trader at his counter has a certain set of weights which he uses every day, and all day, and for all sorts of commodities. Whatever may be in the one scale, the same invariable leaden weight is always in the other. This lump of metal is his standard, and all things are tried by it. Riches practically serve nearly the same purpose in the market of human life. Whether people are aware of it or not, riches become insensibly the standard by which other things are estimated. As the dealer mechanically throws his old leaden pound weight into one scale, whatever species of goods the other may contain; so in human life, by a habit so uniform that it

looks like instinct, men quietly refer all things to the standard of gold.

This is a mistake. Many things are better than gold; and one of these is a good name. A good conscience, indeed, is better than both, and must be kept at all hazards; but, in cases where matters from the higher region do not come into competition, reputation should rank higher than riches in the practical estimation of men. If a man choose honour as the substantial portion of his soul, it flits before him as a shadow, and he is never satisfied; but, shadow though it be, and worthless alone, it is precious as an accompaniment of the substance. The shadows are not the picture, but the picture is a naked, ungainly thing without them. Thus the atmosphere of a good name surrounding it, imparts to real worth additional body and breadth. As the substitute for a good conscience, a good name is a secret torment at the time, and in the end a cheat; but as a graceful outer garment with which a good conscience is clothed, it should be highly valued and carefully preserved by the children of the kingdom. Robes rich in texture, and comely in form, would not make a wooden image gainly; but it does not follow that they are useless to the living human frame. An idol is vile, whether it be gold or a good name; but as articles in the inventory of our Father's gifts, gold is good, and reputation better.

The term "loving favour" serves to indicate the sweetness of being esteemed and loved by our neighbours. The Lord, who has made us capable of that enjoyment, does not set it down as sin. If we be "a

people near unto him," he will take care that we shall not be spoilt by over-doses of loving-kindness from men. It is our part so to act as to deserve that love: then, if it be given, we may innocently enjoy it; if it be withheld, we should meekly submit. If in adversity even a brother turn his back, a Friend remains who sticketh closer.

I do not know any department of providence in which the hand of God is more frequently or more visibly displayed, than in maintaining before the world the good name of those who, before himself, maintain a good conscience. A small parenthesis of two words in the evangelic history serves, like a magnetic needle, to point out in this matter the way of the Lord. Among the twelve, there was one named Judas, besides the betrayer, a man faithful to the Lord. His fellow-disciple John (xiv. 22), having occasion in the course of his history to record a question which this Judas addressed to the Master, adds to his name the significant notandum, "Not Iscariot." "The shields of the earth belong unto God," and he is ever ready to throw one round the reputation of a true disciple, when danger is near. The Master knows who betrays him, and who proves faithful. He will not permit the two to be confounded. Eli made a mistake when he reckoned Hannah among the drunkards, but her righteousness came out as light. There will be no confusion in the current accounts of the world; for its Governor is wise and powerful. When the good and the evil come near each other in sound, some note is inserted at the point, so large that he who runs may read it; some paren-

thetic "not Iscariot" is woven into the thread of history, to keep the marches clear between the disciple and the traitor. He will not spare the sins of his servants. Now by the stern rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan," and now by the silent look that melts the fickle denier's heart, he will take vengeance on their inventions; but he will encircle themselves in his own everlasting arms.

An interesting example of "particular providence" in this department has been recently brought to light. A brief entry was discovered in an authentic record, which seemed to leave a stain on the memory of Patrick Hamilton, the herald and first martyr of the Scottish Reformation. In the household accounts of the royal treasurer for the year 1543, a sum is entered for a gown to Isobel Hamilton, a lady of the queen's household, "daughter of Patrick, abbot of Ferne." This was evidently the martyr's daughter, in all probability a posthumous child. He died young. Hitherto no mention had ever been made of his marriage. In the silence of history it was assumed that he had not been married. Could it be that this youth, whom we have all along considered in every sense a holy martyr of Christ, had imitated in his life the licentiousness of the Romish dignitaries whom he denounced? Almost as soon as the question was raised, an answer was provided. Evidence the most incidental, undesigned, and certain, appears in time to shield the confessor's good name at the threatened point. The writings of Alexander Alesius, a contemporary Scotchman, a witness of Hamilton's death, and a convert of his ministry, have lately been

brought to light on the Continent.* The affectionate pupil, all unconscious of the use that would afterwards be found for his testimony, records, in a treatise written while he was an exile for the truth in Germany, that Hamilton married a "lady of noble rank," in the interval between his return from the Continent and his trial at St. Andrews. The letters of a true disciple's name were beginning to appear very like those of the traitor, and forthwith the writing, "*Not Iscariot*," beamed from the wall, as if emblazoned there by an angel's hand.

* Precursors of Knox—Patrick Hamilton. By Professor Lorimer of London.

XXV.

THE RICH AND THE POOR MEET TOGETHER.

"The rich and the poor meet together."—xxii. 2.

In observing and representing the relative position of these two, or of any two, much depends upon the view-point. When you stand among the crowd on the surface of the plain, the rich and the poor appear to move on lines far apart, and never once to approach each other from the beginning of life's journey to its close. In their birth they seem to be far asunder; one is exposed to hardship as soon as his eyes are opened to the light; the other is tenderly cared for, before he knows that he needs care. In their childhood, intercourse is forbidden, as if it would introduce infection. In maturity the divergence is still farther increased; and distance is maintained even in the grave. This proverb briefly and bluntly affirms that the rich and the poor meet: but where, and when? If we look not to exceptional instances, but to the ordinary course of events, these seem to be the very two classes who are all their lifetime most widely separated, and never meet at all.

Change the view-point, and the scene will change. When you lift your eyes from the earth and look on objects in the expanse of heaven, worlds that move in separate orbits appear to touch each other, and several, like water-drops in contact, merge into a larger one. Thus the spaces between rich and poor, which seemed so

vast to themselves and other observers near them, disappear when eternity becomes the background of the view. They meet by appointment of their common Lord. There are many inevitable meeting-places and meeting-times. They meet in their birth and their death—in the cradle and the grave. At the beginning and at the end, and at many of the intermediate stations of life's pilgrimage, the two courses touch each other, and the two pilgrims walk side by side.

At birth they meet, answering each other by a cry. The one is animated dust, the other animated dust; and both have within themselves the seeds of many sorrows. In regard to the two grand distinguishing features of man's present condition, sin and suffering, they stand precisely on the same level; and if in some minor points there is a distinction, its amount is too insignificant to affect greatly the general result. Even in the periods of infancy and childhood the two paths converge more closely than superficial observers deem. If the rich man's infant gets more attention from servants, the poor man's child lies more constantly on his mother's breast. There is compensation here, arranged by Him who balanced so nicely the greater and the lesser orbs that circulate in space. Mother-love cannot be made by man nor hired for money. We do not undervalue the faithfulness and affection of domestics. We find no fault with gas-light; it is inestimably useful in the absence of day. Such is a hired servant's care of an infant; it is excellent of its kind, but not to be compared with that which is of God's own kindling in a mother's heart. It ought to be instruc-

tive to the rich and reassuring to the fainting, overburdened poor, to observe and remember that the welfare of an infant depends much more on the character than on the wealth of its parents. For this special object a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.

Each sickness is a meeting-place between the rich and the poor, and these occur frequently in the path of life. A rich man's tooth is at least as liable to caries as a poor man's, and it aches as keenly. The best joys, too, as well as the sharpest pains, are common to the two conditions. Food, rest, sleep; light, sounds, odours; family affections and social intercourse,—these and other main arterial streams of sensitive enjoyment are at least as great, and pure, and sweet, in the ordinary experience of the poor as in the ordinary experience of the rich.

It would, however, be a defective, and therefore in so far an untrue, representation of the facts, to speak only of those meetings between rich and poor which nature and providence inexorably prescribe. There are meetings not a few in our day and our land, spontaneous in their character and beneficent in their effects. Some on both sides justly estimate the reciprocal relations of the parties, and honestly address themselves to the duties which these relations impose. This is one of the brightest features of the age,—a gleam of sunlight gilding a somewhat dusky landscape. Good intentions alone, however, will not gain this cause. It is an apostleship that demands the wisdom of the serpent at least as much as the harmlessness of the dove. There are precious rights on both sides that ought to be preserved. One must walk softly

over that meeting-ground, lest he rudely tread on something that is dear to a brother. Those approaches only are safe and useful in which each man is both obliged to respect his neighbour and permitted to respect himself. Willing union of rich and poor for mutual benefit, is the true preventive of those revolutionary shocks which reduce all classes to a level beneath a despot's feet. Looking to the measure of our privileges in this respect, we have good cause to thank God and take courage. When cloud meets cloud in our skies, they seem, although charged with antagonist forces, to give and take gently until the equilibrium is restored; in other countries the same forces, more rigidly pent up, have found relief in the lightning's flash and the thunder's roar. The adjustment comes, but it is with the deluge.

But, close though they are at many stations on the way, the life-lines of rich and poor approach each other still more nearly towards their close. They meet, without a figure, in the grave. Unto dust both, and both alike, return. They meet at the judgment-seat of Christ. None may be absent when the roll of our race is called from the great white throne. At that bar there are no reserved seats, no respected persons.

The lesson is obvious, and it looks both ways. The poor need it as much as the rich, and the rich as much as the poor; here, too, there is equality. Let the one learn humility, the other contentment. If both be "bought with a price," and both, in their several stations, glorify God, yet another meeting awaits them at another meeting-place. In Christ Jesus now there is neither

Greek nor barbarian, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female. That union avails to efface the distinctions that are most deeply marked in nature; much more those which lie on the surface of changing circumstances. There will be no rich men in heaven, for the sinful are all in utmost need; neither will there be any poor men there, for all who enter are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." The rich and the poor meet together in the Father's house; the Lord is the Redeemer of them all.

Faith exercises a decisive influence on practice. The hope, cherished now, of mingling on terms of complete equality with the whole family of God, when they assemble in the Father's house, would cast out corroding jealousies, and sweeten all the intercourse of life. Those who are bought by the same price, and called by the same name, should habitually look forward to the time, not distant, when the distinctions which now separate one from another will be lost in the equal perfection of all. And those who "have this hope in Him," that earthly distinctions will shortly terminate, should "purify themselves, even as He is pure," from that selfishness which, in various forms, turns the necessary inequalities of human condition into thorns for tearing human hearts.

XXVI.

HIDING-PLACES FOR THE PRUDENT.

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished."—xxii. 3.

ONE main element of safety is a just estimate of danger. Many of the great disasters that have occurred in war are due to the rashness which springs from undervaluing the enemy's power. He who foresees the evil, hides himself until it pass; and he who so hides himself escapes the storm which lays lofty rashness low. There is much room for this species of prudence to exercise itself upon, in relation both to the present life and to that which is to come. There are both encompassing dangers and safe hiding-places in the several regions of our secular business, our moral conduct, and our religious hopes.

1. In the ordinary business of life there are evils which may be foreseen by the prudent, and places of shelter in which he may safely lie. When speculation is rife, for example,—when all that a man has, and much that belongs to his neighbour, is risked at a throw, and a fortune made by return of post,—when people, made giddy by success, rush farther and faster into the stream,—evil is near and imminent. It hangs like a thunder-cloud overhead. The prudent in such an hour is on his guard. He seeth the evil before the bolt has actually fallen. He seeks a place of shelter. Nor is that

shelter far away. His daily labour and his legitimate business will be a sufficient defence against these foes. A disciple who has his heart in heaven should beware of fretting because his hands are full all day long with earthly business. Labour, when the Lord appoints it for his people, is a strong wall built round them to keep dangerous enemies out.

2. Evils lie before us in the region of practical morality —evils for which the prudent keep a sharp out-look. Frivolous and licentious companions, theatres, Sabbath amusements, and a multitude of cognate enticements, press upon a young man like wind: if he be like chaff, he will be carried away. The wisest course is to go into hiding. In your father's house and in your sisters' company,—among sober associates and instructive books,—in the study of nature or the practice of art,—a multitude of hiding-places are at hand. Even there the enemy will seldom find you. But a deeper, safer refuge still,—a strong tower of defence, from which all the fiery darts of the wicked will harmlessly rebound,—is that "name of the Lord" into which the righteous run. All the power of the world and its god can neither drive a refugee forth from that hiding-place, nor hurt him within it.

3. But the greatest evils lie in the world to come, and only the eye of faith can foresee them. To be caught by death unready, and placed before the judgment-seat without a plea, and then cast out for ever, are evils so great that in their presence all others disappear like stars in the glare of day. But great though they are, the

prudent may foresee, and the trustful prevent them. There is a refuge, but its gate opens into Time. If the prudent do not enter now, the simple will knock in vain at the closed door, when he has passed on into eternity without any part in Christ. If the needy are numerous, the refuge is ample. If the exposed are in poverty, the admission is free. If the adversary is legion, the Saviour is God.

"The simple pass on, and are punished." "How long, ye simple, will ye love simplicity?" Although the saved are not their own saviours, the lost are their own destroyers. The reason why they perish is declared by Him who knows their hearts: "Ye will not come unto me." A man is passing on in the way which he has chosen. He is eating and drinking, and making merry. Guilt is on his conscience, but he feels not its fiery bite; wrath is treasured over him, but he fears not its final outpouring. The open door of mercy abuts upon his downward path, but he heeds it not: he passes on—he passes by it. As he passes, a voice falls upon his ear; it is the voice of God's own Son conjuring him with strong crying and tears to turn and live. Startled for a moment by the sound, he pauses and looks; but seeing nothing that takes his fancy, he passes on again. Again a voice behind him cries, in tones which show that life and death eternal are turning on their hinge, "Repent, lest you perish! why will you die?" He stops and looks behind. It is a fit of seriousness, but it soon goes off. He heard a sound; but it must have been an echo in the mountains, or a call to some wanderer who has lost his way. Stopping his ears, and shutting his eyes, he passes on. Deaf

XXV.

THE RICH AND THE POOR MEET TOGETHER.

"The rich and the poor meet together."—xxii. 2.

In observing and representing the relative position of these two, or of any two, much depends upon the view-point. When you stand among the crowd on the surface of the plain, the rich and the poor appear to move on lines far apart, and never once to approach each other from the beginning of life's journey to its close. In their birth they seem to be far asunder; one is exposed to hardship as soon as his eyes are opened to the light; the other is tenderly cared for, before he knows that he needs care. In their childhood, intercourse is forbidden, as if it would introduce infection. In maturity the divergence is still farther increased; and distance is maintained even in the grave. This proverb briefly and bluntly affirms that the rich and the poor meet: but where, and when? If we look not to exceptional instances, but to the ordinary course of events, these seem to be the very two classes who are all their lifetime most widely separated, and never meet at all.

Change the view-point, and the scene will change. When you lift your eyes from the earth and look on objects in the expanse of heaven, worlds that move in separate orbits appear to touch each other, and several, like water-drops in contact, merge into a larger one. Thus the spaces between rich and poor, which seemed so

vast to themselves and other observers near them, disappear when eternity becomes the background of the view. They meet by appointment of their common Lord. There are many inevitable meeting-places and meeting-times. They meet in their birth and their death—in the cradle and the grave. At the beginning and at the end, and at many of the intermediate stations of life's pilgrimage, the two courses touch each other, and the two pilgrims walk side by side.

At birth they meet, answering each other by a cry. The one is animated dust, the other animated dust; and both have within themselves the seeds of many sorrows. In regard to the two grand distinguishing features of man's present condition, sin and suffering, they stand precisely on the same level; and if in some minor points there is a distinction, its amount is too insignificant to affect greatly the general result. Even in the periods of infancy and childhood the two paths converge more closely than superficial observers deem. If the rich man's infant gets more attention from servants, the poor man's child lies more constantly on his mother's breast. There is compensation here, arranged by Him who balanced so nicely the greater and the lesser orbs that circulate in space. Mother-love cannot be made by man nor hired for money. We do not undervalue the faithfulness and affection of domestics. We find no fault with gas-light; it is inestimably useful in the absence of day. Such is a hired servant's care of an infant; it is excellent of its kind, but not to be compared with that which is of God's own kindling in a mother's heart. It ought to be instruc-

tive to the rich and reassuring to the fainting, overburdened poor, to observe and remember that the welfare of an infant depends much more on the character than on the wealth of its parents. For this special object a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.

Each sickness is a meeting-place between the rich and the poor, and these occur frequently in the path of life. A rich man's tooth is at least as liable to caries as a poor man's, and it aches as keenly. The best joys, too, as well as the sharpest pains, are common to the two conditions. Food, rest, sleep; light, sounds, odours; family affections and social intercourse,—these and other main arterial streams of sensitive enjoyment are at least as great, and pure, and sweet, in the ordinary experience of the poor as in the ordinary experience of the rich.

It would, however, be a defective, and therefore in so far an untrue, representation of the facts, to speak only of those meetings between rich and poor which nature and providence inexorably prescribe. There are meetings not a few in our day and our land, spontaneous in their character and beneficent in their effects. Some on both sides justly estimate the reciprocal relations of the parties, and honestly address themselves to the duties which these relations impose. This is one of the brightest features of the age,—a gleam of sunlight gilding a somewhat dusky landscape. Good intentions alone, however, will not gain this cause. It is an apostleship that demands the wisdom of the serpent at least as much as the harmlessness of the dove. There are precious rights on both sides that ought to be preserved. One must walk softly

over that meeting-ground, lest he rudely tread on something that is dear to a brother. Those approaches only are safe and useful in which each man is both obliged to respect his neighbour and permitted to respect himself. Willing union of rich and poor for mutual benefit, is the true preventive of those revolutionary shocks which reduce all classes to a level beneath a despot's feet. Looking to the measure of our privileges in this respect, we have good cause to thank God and take courage. When cloud meets cloud in our skies, they seem, although charged with antagonist forces, to give and take gently until the equilibrium is restored; in other countries the same forces, more rigidly pent up, have found relief in the lightning's flash and the thunder's roar. The adjustment comes, but it is with the deluge.

But, close though they are at many stations on the way, the life-lines of rich and poor approach each other still more nearly towards their close. They meet, without a figure, in the grave. Unto dust both, and both alike, return. They meet at the judgment-seat of Christ. None may be absent when the roll of our race is called from the great white throne. At that bar there are no reserved seats, no respected persons.

The lesson is obvious, and it looks both ways. The oor need it as much as the rich, and the rich as much the poor; here, too, there is equality. Let the one arn humility, the other contentment. If both be ought with a price," and both, in their several stations, rify God, yet another meeting awaits them at another eting-place. In Christ Jesus now there is neither

Greek nor barbarian, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female. That union avails to efface the distinctions that are most deeply marked in nature; much more those which lie on the surface of changing circumstances. There will be no rich men in heaven, for the sinful are all in utmost need; neither will there be any poor men there, for all who enter are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." The rich and the poor meet together in the Father's house; the Lord is the Redeemer of them all.

Faith exercises a decisive influence on practice. The hope, cherished now, of mingling on terms of complete equality with the whole family of God, when they assemble in the Father's house, would cast out corroding jealousies, and sweeten all the intercourse of life. Those who are bought by the same price, and called by the same name, should habitually look forward to the time, not distant, when the distinctions which now separate one from another will be lost in the equal perfection of all. And those who "have this hope in Him," that earthly distinctions will shortly terminate, should "purify themselves, even as He is pure," from that selfishness which, in various forms, turns the necessary inequalities of human condition into thorns for tearing human hearts.

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HIDING-PLACES FOR THE PRUDENT.

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished."—xxii. 3.

ONE main element of safety is a just estimate of danger. Many of the great disasters that have occurred in war are due to the rashness which springs from undervaluing the enemy's power. He who foresees the evil, hides himself until it pass; and he who so hides himself escapes the storm which lays lofty rashness low. There is much room for this species of prudence to exercise itself upon, in relation both to the present life and to that which is to come. There are both encompassing dangers and safe hiding-places in the several regions of our secular business, our moral conduct, and our religious hopes.

1. In the ordinary business of life there are evils which may be foreseen by the prudent, and places of shelter in which he may safely lie. When speculation is rife, for example,—when all that a man has, and much that belongs to his neighbour, is risked at a throw, and a fortune made by return of post,—when people, made giddy by success, rush farther and faster into the stream,—evil is near and imminent. It hangs like a thunder-cloud overhead. The prudent in such an hour is on his guard. He seeth the evil before the bolt has actually fallen. He seeks a place of shelter. Nor is that

shelter far away. His daily labour and his legitimate business will be a sufficient defence against these foes. A disciple who has his heart in heaven should beware of fretting because his hands are full all day long with earthly business. Labour, when the Lord appoints it for his people, is a strong wall built round them to keep dangerous enemies out.

2. Evils lie before us in the region of practical morality —evils for which the prudent keep a sharp out-look. Frivolous and licentious companions, theatres, Sabbath amusements, and a multitude of cognate enticements, press upon a young man like wind: if he be like chaff, he will be carried away. The wisest course is to go into hiding. In your father's house and in your sisters' company,—among sober associates and instructive books,—in the study of nature or the practice of art,—a multitude of hiding-places are at hand. Even there the enemy will seldom find you. But a deeper, safer refuge still,—a strong tower of defence, from which all the fiery darts of the wicked will harmlessly rebound,—is that "name of the Lord" into which the righteous run. All the power of the world and its god can neither drive a refugee forth from that hiding-place, nor hurt him within it.

3. But the greatest evils lie in the world to come, and only the eye of faith can foresee them. To be caught by death unready, and placed before the judgment-seat without a plea, and then cast out for ever, are evils so great that in their presence all others disappear like stars in the glare of day. But great though they are, the

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to warnings from above, and blind to beacons reared before him, he still passes on, until, at a moment when he counts his footing firmest, he stumbles over the brink of life, and falls into the hands of the living God! This fall, the Bible tells us, "is a fearful thing." Fear it now, and flee, ye who are passing on through life in your sin, and without a Saviour. Surely it should be plain to any rational being, that though a man may live without God in the world, he cannot escape from God when he dies. Do those who are passing on with their backs to Christ, and their hearts full of vain shows, know where life's boundary-line lies, or what awaits themselves beyond it? Why will men pass on, if they are on such a path that another step may be perdition?

If there were no hope, the wanderers would have no resource but to go forward in despair until their doom declared itself. But here, and now, blessed hope abounds. Cease to go on neglecting the great salvation, and the great salvation is ready for you. Seek and ye shall find. They are not the great, and the wise, and the good, who escape, but the sinners who seek the Saviour,—the prudent who foresee the evil, and hide. The question is not, How great is your sin? or, How long have you been a sinner? If you are lost while another is saved, it is not because your guilt is greater than his, but because you neglected the salvation which he deemed precious. If the simple is punished at last, it is because, in spite of a beseeching, weeping Saviour, he "passed on" through the day of grace, and fell upon the day of judgment.

them at once with the best exercise for improvement and the most powerful motive to urge them on. Love to the little ones will make them try the training, and each trial will increase their capacity for the work. Every effort to train their children will elevate themselves; and every degree of elevation to which they attain will be an addition to their power of doing good to the children. God's good gifts run in circles. An entrance into his family in the spirit of adoption secures for you the benefit of them all. If you should certainly know that in five years hence your boy, who is now a little child, would fall into a deep river all alone, you would not wait till the event should happen ere you prepared to meet it. You would begin now the process which would be safety then. Your child cannot swim, and you are not qualified to teach him; but forthwith you would acquire the art yourself, that you might communicate it to him, and that he might be prepared to meet the emergency. Now beyond all peradventure your child, if he survive, will in a few years be plunged into a sea of wickedness, through which he must swim for his life. Nothing but right moral principles, obtained from the Bible, and indurated by early training into a confirmed habit, will give him the necessary buoyancy. Hence, as you would preserve your child from sinking through the sea of sin into final perdition, you are bound to qualify yourself for training him up in the way he should go.

In like manner when the obstacles are extrinsic, the necessities of his child supply the parent with motives to exert himself for their removal; and the effort which he

an adventurous inquirer at any time dare to raise them, he is silenced by a short and simple process. Tyrants make a solitude, and call it peace. When they point with scorn to the strifes which agitate Protestant communities, we sit easy under the taunt. We love not the contentions for their own sake, but we love liberty so much that we endure, with some measure of equanimity, the troubles which, while men continue imperfect, must follow in its wake. If the uneasy twisting and groaning of the body politic prove that the nation, in matters of education, is on a sick-bed, they prove also that she is not in the grave. Granted that Britain educationally is ailing; other countries that might be named are dead. We would be glad to see the silent satisfaction of robust health, but, in the meantime, we like the cry which indicates life, better than the stillness that broods over the body when the spirit has gone.

This verse of the Bible is a pregnant utterance on our much-vexed question. It goes to the point at once, and goes through all the points in a very short space of time. Root and branch of the case are here. Adopting the terms of the English version, as conveying the sentiment of the original substantially and perspicuously, without the aid of critical remarks, we find in it three clearly distinguished yet closely related parts:—

1. Whom we should educate—the material: "A child."

2. How we should educate—the process: "Train up."

3. Into what we should educate—the aim and issue: "In the way he should go."

In education, the *material* should be pliable, the *method* skilful, and the *pattern* divine. These three points correspond nearly to the philosophy, the art, and the religion of the question.

1. The material on which the educator operates,—"A *child.*" That childhood is the proper period for education is one of the most obvious of all general truths. In profession, at least, it is universally acknowledged. The law on which it is founded holds good in all countries and all times. Its range is not limited to human kind. It traverses the boundary of the animal kingdom, and determines the form of a branch as well as the character of a man. The world teems with analogies, both real and obvious, whereby the moralist may enforce the duty of educating in the comparatively pliable period of youth. You may, within certain limits, determine at will the direction of a river, a tree, a man, if you touch them near their sources, where they are tiny and tender; but none of the three when full-grown can be bent, except in very minute degrees, and at an expense of labour greatly disproportionate to the result. The belief universally diffused through society, and floating impalpable in the moral atmosphere, has at one spot been precipitated and solidified in the convenient mould of a rhythmical Scottish proverb:—

"Learn young, learn fair;
Learn auld, learn sair."

In the horizon of the nation's future there is no more ominous cloud than the multitude of children that are advancing to maturity uneducated. We were slow to

learn the danger; but we are in some measure aroused at length. The lesson has been lashed into us by the rod of correction, after gentler admonitions had been tried in vain. The aggregate of crime was becoming so great, that the vessel of the State was sensibly staggering under its weight. When we came to close quarters with full-grown criminals, we found that neglected children are the raw material out of which they grow. Efforts were put forth by individuals, societies, and the legislature, to mitigate or arrest the evil. Hence the ragged schools and kindred institutions which have of late years occupied so large a share of the public attention, and which characterize the philanthropy of the day. The opinion boldly proclaimed by some distinguished Christian patriots, That no man has a right to rear a young savage in his house, and let him loose when full-bodied to prey upon a civilized community, seems to be making its way toward general acceptance. It is conceded that when parents cannot, or will not educate their children, the nation may and should, in its own interest, effectually interfere. The disputes that have arisen respect not the principle, but the best method of carrying it into practice. Slowly and painfully the confession has been wrung from an afflicted and penitent people, that to ply the gallows and the penal colonies for the punishment of convicted malefactors is only the left-hand side of national duty; while we permit careless or profligate parents to inundate society with a brood of young Anakim, a hybrid compound of animal strength and moral imbecility. The double conviction is taking possession of the popular mind, and

already expressing itself in imperial legislation, that the nation in its collective capacity should come to the rescue, and that the rescue can be effected only by a thorough and universal education of the young. We live in an active and hopeful time. Life does not stagnate for want of movement. There is room for all—for the man of thought, and the man of labour—for all who have talents, and all the talents of each. We need a spark of truth from the head of the wise, and a push from the arm of the strong—one contribution to the direction of the movement, and another to its force. To draw the country out of the slough in which it has deeply settled down, we need a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together.

We must not deceive ourselves by accepting a shadow for the substance. A general confession that the thing ought to be done is not the doing of the thing. The kind of evil spirit that possesses the outcast, neglected youth of the kingdom, will not go out before a blast of words, whether spoken or printed. After all that has been said, the greater part of the work remains to be done. The number of children undergoing a training into evil, is at once the greatest disgrace and the greatest danger to the commonwealth. The most formidable barrier, however, which impedes practical reformation is neither the inertia of parliament nor the intolerance of sects, but the short-sighted selfishness of human hearts. It costs something to keep our outcast brother in a course of training from childhood into adolescence, and therefore under various pretexts we shuffle the obligation off. The

sin most surely finds us out, and exacts a fourfold retribution, but we are not prudent enough to foresee the evil and hide from it betimes in measures of prevention. Even the machinery which has been erected for the accomplishment of this work is left in part unemployed, not for want of the raw material, but to save the expense of the operation. Corporations and communities, penny wise and pound foolish, save their money, and leave the lost little ones lying in the nation's skirts, like the cannon balls which they sew up in the hasty winding-sheet of those who die at sea, a dead-weight to make the body sink. The guardians of a union may stave off an assessment by making strait the gate of entrance to the industrial school;* but out of the ashes of every such crushed request a sturdier applicant springs up, whose demands they will be compelled to grant,—whose heaviest drafts they will be compelled to honour. It is easy to abandon feeble infants, but when abandoned children have grown wicked men, their voice must be heard, and their weight will be felt. Crime and punishment constitute the awful Nemesis of our neglect. Train up a child in the way he should go, while he is a child. For that specific work, now only is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.

2. The process of education,—"*Train up* a child." Of

* I have myself danced attendance on a police magistrates' court from day to day, according to successive appointments by the officials, provided with witnesses and the person of the culprit, in the hope of rescuing a fatherless child from a training in beggary by her own mother; and have been compelled to retire from the conflict baffled and disgusted, because agents of parochial boards protected successfully the cash-box of their constituents.

late years much attention has been directed to the distinction between teaching and training. The effort was needed, and has been useful. The tendency in a former age to pile up reading, writing, and a few other kindred arts, and call them education, was superficial in its philosophy, and disastrous in its practical results. There cannot be training without teaching; but there may be teaching without training. The various branches of knowledge which the teacher imparts constitute as it were the elements which the trainer employs. They are the types skilfully cast, and lying in the fount before him; but they have little meaning, and less power, until they have been arranged in his frame, and submitted to his press. Moral training according to a divine standard, with the view of moulding the human being, while yet young and tender, into right principles and habits of action, and using up in its processes all kinds and degrees of information within its reach, is the only education worthy of the name. So much has of late been done in this department, and so familiar have all the intelligent portion of the community become with the subject, that though it comes most naturally in our way, we do not think it necessary in this place either to explain what moral training is, or to enforce its paramount importance in education.

The oldest training school is still the best. Home is the best school-room, sisters and brothers the best class-fellows, parents the best masters. The chief value of those charitable institutions for the training of the young which characterize and honour our age, consists in sup-

Greek nor barbarian, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female. That union avails to efface the distinctions that are most deeply marked in nature; much more those which lie on the surface of changing circumstances. There will be no rich men in heaven, for the sinful are all in utmost need; neither will there be any poor men there, for all who enter are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." The rich and the poor meet together in the Father's house; the Lord is the Redeemer of them all.

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makes for his child will rebound in blessings on himself. For example, if a parent has, through carelessness or a supposed necessity, adopted a line of life which demands Sabbath-day labour, or late hours all the week, he will discover, as his children grow up, that his business is incompatible with his duty to them. If, from love to his family and enlightened desire for their welfare, he successfully shake off the bondage, and obtain the means of living without giving the Lord's day or the evening hours to labour, he has thereby secured a double boon,—to his children and to himself.

Sabbath-school instruction, although good as far as it goes, does not supply adequate moral education for the juvenile hordes which infest the streets of our large cities. The interval between Sabbath and Sabbath is too wide. It is like spreading a net with meshes seven inches wide instead of one, before a shoal of herrings. By the great gap of the week, the little Arabs easily slip through, in spite of the stout string which you extend across their path on the Sabbath evening. Ply the work by all means, and ply it hopefully. Labour for the Lord in that department will not be lost. Saving truth is thereby deposited in many minds, which the Spirit of God will make fruitful in a future day. Ply the work of Sabbath schools, but let not the existence and abundance of these efforts deceive us into the belief that the work is adequately done. The Sabbath school cannot train up a child. The six days' training at home, if it be evil, will, in the battle of life, carry it over the one day's teaching in the school, however good it may be.

3. The aim and end of education,—"Train up a child *in the way he should go.*" This is the most important of the three. Wisdom in choosing the proper time, and skill in adopting the best method, would be of no avail if false principles were thereby instilled into the mind, and evil habits ingrafted on the life. If you are in the wrong way, the more vigorously you prosecute the journey the sooner will disaster come. If we do not train the children in Truth and Righteousness, it would be better that we should not train them at all. Here, at the very outset, we meet full in the face the old question, "What is truth?" The Teacher to whom Pilate petulantly put the question will give us the answer, if we reverently sit at his feet: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Christ is the truth, and the Scriptures the standard by which truth may be known. This is not only religiously the best solution of the question, but philosophically the only solution that can be given. If we do not adopt the Bible as our standard in training the young, combined training is impossible. If in moral principles every man is his own lawgiver, there is no law at all, and no authority. You may train a fruit-tree by nailing its branches to a wall, or tying them to an espalier railing; but the tree whose branches have nothing to lean on but air is not trained at all. It is not a dispute between the Scriptures and some other rival standard, for no such standard exists or is proposed. It is a question between the Bible as a standard, and no standard at all. But training without an acknowledged standard is nothing—

is an empty form of words, by which ingenious men amuse themselves. There are some who would borrow from the Bible whatever moral principles they have, and yet are unwilling to own the Scriptures, in their integrity, as an authority binding the conscience; because, if it is binding in one thing, it is binding in all.

We assume, then, that if moral training has any substantial existence, it is a training according to the rule and under the authority of the Bible, as the revealed will of God. In efficient training these two things are absolutely necessary,—a *rule* to show the ignorant what the way is, and an *authority* to keep the wayward on it. A thread extended in the air between two points is a sufficient rule for those who need nothing but a rule, and by such a line, accordingly, the builder rears his wall; but an extended thread pointing out the boundary between your garden and your neighbour's is not sufficient where children and ripe fruit are brought into contact. Besides a mark to let them see where their neighbour's property is, a wall is needed to keep them out of it. In the Scriptures, received and revered as the inspired word of God for the whole duty of man, we have at once a conspicuous rule and a supreme authority. Those who practically neglect or theoretically oppose that word, have bereft themselves both of the knowledge and the power necessary in the moral training of youth. They have neither a line to let the honest see the right way, nor a sanction to prevent the dishonest from transgressing it.

The adverse argument of theorists, although it opens up an interesting field of speculation, does not in practice

exert much power. The objection to scriptural doctrine in the training of the young proceeds upon the assumption that, if you imbue the mind with opinions before the judgment is capable of independently sifting the evidence, the ultimate issue cannot be a reasonable service. The difficulty so pressed emits an imposing sound, but its heart is hollow and its sides are thin. It collapses under the slightest rub. To leave the mind throughout childhood without prepossessions in regard to religious truth is simply impossible. The question does not lie between furnishing the mind with opinions in youth, and leaving it empty. Left empty it cannot be. We are limited to the alternative of filling it with the sifted wheat of truth, or abandoning it to be filled with the flying chaff of various error. If you do not employ the revealed doctrines of the Bible as an authoritative rule in the training of your child, you have not maintained neutrality: you have decided for your child against the authority of the Bible. When he has, under your training, grown up to manhood without God in the world, you cannot bring him back to the softness of childhood again, to correct the error, if error there has been. We are shut up to the necessity of making a choice for the moral training of our children, as certainly as we are shut up to the necessity of choosing the kind of food by which their bodies shall be sustained.

But further: the argument which proves that we should not commit the child according to our opinion, proves too much, and therefore proves nothing. The principle would compel you to leave the child untaught on many other

points besides the doctrines of revealed religion. The youth whose intellect has been highly educated from childhood, may in maturity adopt the opinion that such education is an evil, and that he would have been happier if he had grown up a worse philosopher and a robuster man. But he is committed for ever by the choice of his parents. The effects of that choice cannot be removed. The same reasoning holds good even in matters more exclusively physical. On the same supposition you have no right to determine for your child the kind of food and clothing to which his frame shall be habituated, for that choice once made can never in its effects be reversed. The child could not judge; you judged for him; and the man is bound all his days by your decision. Some sort of training, both physical and moral, you must give the child, and you are bound to give him that which in your judgment is best, for he is incapable of forming a judgment for himself.

A Chinese parent compresses his child's feet, by shoes of peculiar shape and diminutive size. An African parent covers his child's face with fantastic markings, and stamps them indelibly in the flesh. Both operations are useless and cruel. They thwart the purposes of God, and leave a blemish on his beautiful work. These parents sin in thus disfiguring for life the bodies of their children. They err; but wherein does the error lie? Not in the fact of forming a judgment as to the treatment of their infants, but in forming a judgment that is false and injurious. In this enlightened community every parent, by aid of professional skill, performs a painful operation on the

body of his infant. He makes a wound in the flesh, and into that wound insinuates a drop of poisonous fluid. The poison circulates through the blood. A fever ensues, and an unsightly sore grows over the wound, leaving a permanent mark in the skin. You find no fault with the parent for all this. Why? Because he thereby diminishes greatly the risk of a dangerous disease. The operation is useful. The judgment that dictated it was sound. This shows on what ground the Chinese and African should be condemned. If you say they went beyond their province when they took it upon themselves to judge for others to the effect of indenting indelible marks upon their flesh, you include in your condemnation those parents who, with the most enlightened affection, inoculate their children to preserve them from small-pox. Both in the physical and moral departments the error lies, not in forming a judgment and carrying it out, but in forming and executing an erroneous judgment. The court is competent, if the sentence be according to truth.

But the moral training of children is much more effectually obstructed by the dead-weight of indifference which will not do it, than by the theoretic opposition which argues that it should not be done. An erroneous principle may be met by argument—may be neutralized by diffused truth; but what can argument do against the inertia of parents who, in thousands and tens of thousands, eat and drink and sleep, leaving their children to nature and chance, as trees of the forest or beasts of the field?

In this department much remains to be done. Our

position, nationally, is not high in the godly upbringing of the young at present; but one good symptom is, that we have of late been in some measure awakened to observe and confess our defects. In the meantime three classes of persons amongst us should be supported by all the help that human arms can offer, and cheered by all the hopes that can be brought from heaven. These are, (1.) Those parents who devote themselves at home to the training of their own children in the way of truth and goodness; (2.) Those who prosecute household missionary work in lapsed and listless families; and (3.) Those who, by combined effort and on a large scale, gather outcast children into schools, whether on the Lord's day or throughout the week, and there nobly do their best to heal again the wounds which other hands have already made.

It is a blessed employment to be leading little ones to Jesus. We know that it is a service with which the Lord himself is well pleased. These neglected wanderers when gathered in, constitute the kingdom, and satisfy the soul of the King. To gather them is honourable work. It is a "well-doing" of which Christians should never weary.

XXVIII.

THE BONDAGE OF THE BORROWER.

"The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender."—xxii. 7.

THE law is laid down in general terms, that it may be freely modified in its application by the circumstances of each case. It is not written, Thou shalt not borrow; or, Thou shalt not lend. The text describes the practical consequences of the act, and leaves every reader to judge for himself whether his circumstances permit or require him to come under their influence. In some cases it may be right to borrow, and in others it is certainly wrong: this text does not cut the knot and make morality easy by an authoritative permission on the one side, or an authoritative prohibition on the other. It is an instance of the reserve which is a common characteristic of Scripture. Minute directions are not given for the conduct of daily life. Principles are laid down and tendencies indicated. From these every man must construct a working plan for himself, according to the analogy of faith and the testimony of conscience.

A book of medicine, emanating from the highest authority, distinctly describes the effects of a certain stimulant, when administered internally, upon the human body. It quickens the circulation, and stirs all the vital functions into a greater than their normal activity; but when the

effect of the potion has passed away, a lassitude supervenes, which brings down the patient's strength to a lower point than that at which it stood before the application of the stimulant. The medicine adds nothing to the permanent resources of the system, but gives you the command of a stronger impulse for a time, on condition of full repayment, and something to boot, as the price of the accommodation. Already we know certainly that this article of the pharmacopœia may in peculiar circumstances be useful as a medicine, but can never in any case be available as food. A man may be so situated that the power of making an extraordinary effort for an hour will be worth purchasing at the price of an exhaustion many degrees below his normal condition during the whole of the following day. In such a case temporary resort to the medicine may be a lawful expedient. But no circumstances can possibly make it wise or safe to administer or use it from day to day as an ordinary article of food.

The expedient to which the "borrower" resorts in his difficulty is precisely such a stimulant. It is not necessarily and in all cases evil. It is a medicine, but not food. It may sometimes be administered with good effect at the crisis of the pecuniary distress. But such is the character of this substance, that you cannot safely employ it as a curative agent at all, unless you secure the highest professional advice as to the prescription at first, and exercise the most scrupulous care afterwards in the actual administration of the dose. Thus prescribed and thus administered it is lawful and useful. It is one of those good things of God which watchful disciples may receive

with thankfulness, and use with profit. When you have taken into consideration the character and capacity of the individual who requires the stimulant, the kind and extent of the losses that have temporarily placed him in straits, and the prospects of trade at the time, generally in the community and particularly in his own department—when you have considered and compared all these elements, and found that the stoppage is only a momentary faint in a sound constitution, by all means administer the draught: but watch the patient while he is under its influence, and bring him back as soon as possible to his ordinary regimen. If he begin to like the stimulant, and the dreamy comfort which it supplies; if he manifest a tendency to resort to another dose, as soon as the effects of the last begin to wear away,—the symptoms are alarming. The patient has acquired a morbid appetite for the medicine. The cure has become more dangerous to him than the disease.

There is a remarkably close analogy between the expedient of borrowing money in a temporary strait, and the expedient of borrowing for the moment from your own future store by means of opium or ardent spirits. There is a likeness in the usefulness and power of the expedients when skilfully applied at the crisis of an ailment; a likeness in the tendency to undue repetition of the stimulants, often begotten in the patient by their use; and a likeness in the wretched life-long bondage to which the victim is reduced when that which at first was occasionally resorted to as a medicine has become necessary to him as daily food.

When an honest and industrious man has been thrown into pecuniary distress by a series of adverse circumstances which he could neither foresee nor avert, he may —he should cast about for some one who can, by a loan, help him over the chasm which has suddenly opened across his path and forbids his progress. When a man of worth has fallen into such a strait, he generally finds some one able and willing to do a brother's turn. In this lower sphere of temporal things, they who wait upon the Lord are often enabled to renew their strength. In this department, they who observe wisely the course of events, may often see and taste the loving-kindness of the Lord. Having frankly grasped in his weakness a brother's offered arm, he puts all his energies to their utmost stretch, in order to reach at the earliest moment an independent footing, where he can stand alone again. This done, he takes his own burden upon his own shoulders, and sets his benefactor free. It is well. He fell into distress. He applied a remedy. The remedy was successful. He is thankful for the relief which it gave him, but he has no desire to continue the application of the remedy. He casts it away as the convalescent casts away his drugs, glad that he had them in the time of need, but as glad to get quit of them when the time of need is past. This hearty, conclusive repudiation of the labelled bottles that stood in rows in his sick-room is one symptom that the cure is complete. The tendency, wherever it is manifested, to continue sipping at the stimulant or narcotic draught, is evidence that if the patient has been relieved of one disease, he has in the

process contracted a worse. The honest man who borrowed in a time of need, never breathes freely till he is standing on his own feet, and working his own way again. "Owe no man anything," sounded in his ears as long as he was in debt; and he felt that he could not answer to the Lord whose word it is, if he should indolently neglect any opportunity of reducing it. His fear of God and his regard for man conspire to strain every nerve in the effort to be free.

But there is in the community a numerous class whose normal condition is debt. If at the first they took borrowed money, as they might take opium, a medicine to relieve an acute disease, which would not yield to other means, they chew it now every day and all day, as the staff of their life. The appetite has become like a second nature. Whenever real life touches the dreamer roughly, he opens his eyes languidly, takes another pill, and sleeps himself into the fool's paradise again, until the next jolt disturbs his ignoble slumbers. This disease is prevalent in the community. There are dealers of various grades who seem to count debt their element. They live in it. They do not expect to get out of it. They scarcely wish —at least they never energetically strive to get out. They borrow and spend, and borrow again, in a weary unvarying circle. If they lose, the loss falls on others, for they never possess anything which is really their own. The disease is chronic, and the patient in some sense actually likes to be in it. To him the negative condition of debt affords fewer cares than would the positive possession of wealth. A community cannot

XXV.

THE RICH AND THE POOR MEET TOGETHER.

"The rich and the poor meet together."—xxii. 2.

In observing and representing the relative position of these two, or of any two, much depends upon the view-point. When you stand among the crowd on the surface of the plain, the rich and the poor appear to move on lines far apart, and never once to approach each other from the beginning of life's journey to its close. In their birth they seem to be far asunder; one is exposed to hardship as soon as his eyes are opened to the light; the other is tenderly cared for, before he knows that he needs care. In their childhood, intercourse is forbidden, as if it would introduce infection. In maturity the divergence is still farther increased; and distance is maintained even in the grave. This proverb briefly and bluntly affirms that the rich and the poor meet: but where, and when? If we look not to exceptional instances, but to the ordinary course of events, these seem to be the very two classes who are all their lifetime most widely separated, and never meet at all.

Change the view-point, and the scene will change. When you lift your eyes from the earth and look on objects in the expanse of heaven, worlds that move in separate orbits appear to touch each other, and several, like water-drops in contact, merge into a larger one. Thus the spaces between rich and poor, which seemed so

vast to themselves and other observers near them, disappear when eternity becomes the background of the view. They meet by appointment of their common Lord. There are many inevitable meeting-places and meeting-times. They meet in their birth and their death—in the cradle and the grave. At the beginning and at the end, and at many of the intermediate stations of life's pilgrimage, the two courses touch each other, and the two pilgrims walk side by side.

At birth they meet, answering each other by a cry. The one is animated dust, the other animated dust; and both have within themselves the seeds of many sorrows. In regard to the two grand distinguishing features of man's present condition, sin and suffering, they stand precisely on the same level; and if in some minor points there is a distinction, its amount is too insignificant to affect greatly the general result. Even in the periods of infancy and childhood the two paths converge more closely than superficial observers deem. If the rich man's infant gets more attention from servants, the poor man's child lies more constantly on his mother's breast. There is compensation here, arranged by Him who balanced so nicely the greater and the lesser orbs that circulate in space. Mother-love cannot be made by man nor hired for money. We do not undervalue the faithfulness and affection of domestics. We find no fault with gas-light; it is inestimably useful in the absence of day. Such is a hired servant's care of an infant; it is excellent of its kind, but not to be compared with that which is of God's own kindling in a mother's heart. It ought to be instruc-

tive to the rich and reassuring to the fainting, overburdened poor, to observe and remember that the welfare of an infant depends much more on the character than on the wealth of its parents. For this special object a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.

Each sickness is a meeting-place between the rich and the poor, and these occur frequently in the path of life. A rich man's tooth is at least as liable to caries as a poor man's, and it aches as keenly. The best joys, too, as well as the sharpest pains, are common to the two conditions. Food, rest, sleep; light, sounds, odours; family affections and social intercourse,—these and other main arterial streams of sensitive enjoyment are at least as great, and pure, and sweet, in the ordinary experience of the poor as in the ordinary experience of the rich.

It would, however, be a defective, and therefore in so far an untrue, representation of the facts, to speak only of those meetings between rich and poor which nature and providence inexorably prescribe. There are meetings not a few in our day and our land, spontaneous in their character and beneficent in their effects. Some on both sides justly estimate the reciprocal relations of the parties, and honestly address themselves to the duties which these relations impose. This is one of the brightest features of the age,—a gleam of sunlight gilding a somewhat dusky landscape. Good intentions alone, however, will not gain this cause. It is an apostleship that demands the wisdom of the serpent at least as much as the harmlessness of the dove. There are precious rights on both sides that ought to be preserved. One must walk softly

over that meeting-ground, lest he rudely tread on something that is dear to a brother. Those approaches only are safe and useful in which each man is both obliged to respect his neighbour and permitted to respect himself. Willing union of rich and poor for mutual benefit, is the true preventive of those revolutionary shocks which reduce all classes to a level beneath a despot's feet. Looking to the measure of our privileges in this respect, we have good cause to thank God and take courage. When cloud meets cloud in our skies, they seem, although charged with antagonist forces, to give and take gently until the equilibrium is restored; in other countries the same forces, more rigidly pent up, have found relief in the lightning's flash and the thunder's roar. The adjustment comes, but it is with the deluge.

But, close though they are at many stations on the way, the life-lines of rich and poor approach each other still more nearly towards their close. They meet, without a figure, in the grave. Unto dust both, and both alike, return. They meet at the judgment-seat of Christ. None may be absent when the roll of our race is called from the great white throne. At that bar there are no reserved seats, no respected persons.

The lesson is obvious, and it looks both ways. The poor need it as much as the rich, and the rich as much as the poor; here, too, there is equality. Let the one learn humility, the other contentment. If both be "bought with a price," and both, in their several stations, glorify God, yet another meeting awaits them at another meeting-place. In Christ Jesus now there is neither

Greek nor barbarian, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female. That union avails to efface the distinctions that are most deeply marked in nature; much more those which lie on the surface of changing circumstances. There will be no rich men in heaven, for the sinful are all in utmost need; neither will there be any poor men there, for all who enter are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." The rich and the poor meet together in the Father's house; the Lord is the Redeemer of them all.

Faith exercises a decisive influence on practice. The hope, cherished now, of mingling on terms of complete equality with the whole family of God, when they assemble in the Father's house, would cast out corroding jealousies, and sweeten all the intercourse of life. Those who are bought by the same price, and called by the same name, should habitually look forward to the time, not distant, when the distinctions which now separate one from another will be lost in the equal perfection of all. And those who "have this hope in Him," that earthly distinctions will shortly terminate, should "purify themselves, even as He is pure," from that selfishness which, in various forms, turns the necessary inequalities of human condition into thorns for tearing human hearts.

XXVI.

HIDING-PLACES FOR THE PRUDENT.

"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished."—xxii. 3.

ONE main element of safety is a just estimate of danger. Many of the great disasters that have occurred in war are due to the rashness which springs from undervaluing the enemy's power. He who foresees the evil, hides himself until it pass; and he who so hides himself escapes the storm which lays lofty rashness low. There is much room for this species of prudence to exercise itself upon, in relation both to the present life and to that which is to come. There are both encompassing dangers and safe hiding-places in the several regions of our secular business, our moral conduct, and our religious hopes.

1. In the ordinary business of life there are evils which may be foreseen by the prudent, and places of shelter in which he may safely lie. When speculation is rife, for example,—when all that a man has, and much that belongs to his neighbour, is risked at a throw, and a fortune made by return of post,—when people, made giddy by success, rush farther and faster into the stream,—evil is near and imminent. It hangs like a thunder-cloud overhead. The prudent in such an hour is on his guard. He seeth the evil before the bolt has actually fallen. He seeks a place of shelter. Nor is that

shelter far away. His daily labour and his legitimate business will be a sufficient defence against these foes. A disciple who has his heart in heaven should beware of fretting because his hands are full all day long with earthly business. Labour, when the Lord appoints it for his people, is a strong wall built round them to keep dangerous enemies out.

2. Evils lie before us in the region of practical morality —evils for which the prudent keep a sharp out-look. Frivolous and licentious companions, theatres, Sabbath amusements, and a multitude of cognate enticements, press upon a young man like wind: if he be like chaff, he will be carried away. The wisest course is to go into hiding. In your father's house and in your sisters' company,—among sober associates and instructive books,—in the study of nature or the practice of art,—a multitude of hiding-places are at hand. Even there the enemy will seldom find you. But a deeper, safer refuge still,—a strong tower of defence, from which all the fiery darts of the wicked will harmlessly rebound,—is that "name of the Lord" into which the righteous run. All the power of the world and its god can neither drive a refugee forth from that hiding-place, nor hurt him within it.

3. But the greatest evils lie in the world to come, and only the eye of faith can foresee them. To be caught by death unready, and placed before the judgment-seat without a plea, and then cast out for ever, are evils so great that in their presence all others disappear like stars in the glare of day. But great though they are, the

prudent may foresee, and the trustful prevent them. There is a refuge, but its gate opens into Time. If the prudent do not enter now, the simple will knock in vain at the closed door, when he has passed on into eternity without any part in Christ. If the needy are numerous, the refuge is ample. If the exposed are in poverty, the admission is free. If the adversary is legion, the Saviour is God.

"The simple pass on, and are punished." "How long, ye simple, will ye love simplicity?" Although the saved are not their own saviours, the lost are their own destroyers. The reason why they perish is declared by Him who knows their hearts: "Ye will not come unto me." A man is passing on in the way which he has chosen. He is eating and drinking, and making merry. Guilt is on his conscience, but he feels not its fiery bite; wrath is treasured over him, but he fears not its final outpouring. The open door of mercy abuts upon his downward path, but he heeds it not: he passes on—he passes by it. As he passes, a voice falls upon his ear; it is the voice of God's own Son conjuring him with strong crying and tears to turn and live. Startled for a moment by the sound, he pauses and looks; but seeing nothing that takes his fancy, he passes on again. Again a voice behind him cries, in tones which show that life and death eternal are turning on their hinge, "Repent, lest you perish! why will you die?" He stops and looks behind. It is a fit of seriousness, but it soon goes off. He heard a sound; but it must have been an echo in the mountains, or a call to some wanderer who has lost his way. Stopping his ears, and shutting his eyes, he passes on. Deaf

to warnings from above, and blind to beacons reared before him, he still passes on, until, at a moment when he counts his footing firmest, he stumbles over the brink of life, and falls into the hands of the living God! This fall, the Bible tells us, "is a fearful thing." Fear it now, and flee, ye who are passing on through life in your sin, and without a Saviour. Surely it should be plain to any rational being, that though a man may live without God in the world, he cannot escape from God when he dies. Do those who are passing on with their backs to Christ, and their hearts full of vain shows, know where life's boundary-line lies, or what awaits themselves beyond it? Why will men pass on, if they are on such a path that another step may be perdition?

If there were no hope, the wanderers would have no resource but to go forward in despair until their doom declared itself. But here, and now, blessed hope abounds. Cease to go on neglecting the great salvation, and the great salvation is ready for you. Seek and ye shall find. They are not the great, and the wise, and the good, who escape, but the sinners who seek the Saviour,—the prudent who foresee the evil, and hide. The question is not, How great is your sin? or, How long have you been a sinner? If you are lost while another is saved, it is not because your guilt is greater than his, but because you neglected the salvation which he deemed precious. If the simple is punished at last, it is because, in spite of a beseeching, weeping Saviour, he "passed on" through the day of grace, and fell upon the day of judgment.

XXVII.

EDUCATION.

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."—xxii. 6.

At all times and in all places education is a matter of first-rate importance; and in this country at the present time its importance is, in some measure, felt and acknowledged. It has become, or at least is becoming, the question of the day. Out of it many difficulties spring; over it many battles are fought. It should moderate our grief, however, and silence our fretful complaints, to remember that our troubles grow out of our privileges. This species of thistle is found only in fat corn-fields. It is never seen in uncultivated moors. It is because we have so much education that we complain so loudly of the deficiency, and cry so earnestly for more. Besides all the noise which we make about the quantity of education, we quarrel energetically about the kind. Now, although this state of warfare is not the optimism in which we should acquiesce as a final attainment, yet, as a symptom of progress, we might have worse. The educational difficulties which trouble us do not agitate the worshippers of Brahma or Mahomet. Few of them are felt in Spain or Italy. These questions do not rise in those portions of the world where superstition and despotism crush the intellectual energies of the people. If

an adventurous inquirer at any time dare to raise them, he is silenced by a short and simple process. Tyrants make a solitude, and call it peace. When they point with scorn to the strifes which agitate Protestant communities, we sit easy under the taunt. We love not the contentions for their own sake, but we love liberty so much that we endure, with some measure of equanimity, the troubles which, while men continue imperfect, must follow in its wake. If the uneasy twisting and groaning of the body politic prove that the nation, in matters of education, is on a sick-bed, they prove also that she is not in the grave. Granted that Britain educationally is ailing; other countries that might be named are dead. We would be glad to see the silent satisfaction of robust health, but, in the meantime, we like the cry which indicates life, better than the stillness that broods over the body when the spirit has gone.

This verse of the Bible is a pregnant utterance on our much-vexed question. It goes to the point at once, and goes through all the points in a very short space of time. Root and branch of the case are here. Adopting the terms of the English version, as conveying the sentiment of the original substantially and perspicuously, without the aid of critical remarks, we find in it three clearly distinguished yet closely related parts:—

1. Whom we should educate—the material: "A child."

2. How we should educate—the process: "Train up."

3. Into what we should educate—the aim and issue: "In the way he should go."

In education, the *material* should be pliable, the *method* skilful, and the *pattern* divine. These three points correspond nearly to the philosophy, the art, and the religion of the question.

1. The material on which the educator operates,—"A *child.*" That childhood is the proper period for education is one of the most obvious of all general truths. In profession, at least, it is universally acknowledged. The law on which it is founded holds good in all countries and all times. Its range is not limited to human kind. It traverses the boundary of the animal kingdom, and determines the form of a branch as well as the character of a man. The world teems with analogies, both real and obvious, whereby the moralist may enforce the duty of educating in the comparatively pliable period of youth. You may, within certain limits, determine at will the direction of a river, a tree, a man, if you touch them near their sources, where they are tiny and tender; but none of the three when full-grown can be bent, except in very minute degrees, and at an expense of labour greatly disproportionate to the result. The belief universally diffused through society, and floating impalpable in the moral atmosphere, has at one spot been precipitated and solidified in the convenient mould of a rhythmical Scottish proverb:—

> "Learn young, learn fair;
> Learn auld, learn sair."

In the horizon of the nation's future there is no more ominous cloud than the multitude of children that are advancing to maturity uneducated. We were slow to

learn the danger; but we are in some measure aroused at length. The lesson has been lashed into us by the rod of correction, after gentler admonitions had been tried in vain. The aggregate of crime was becoming so great, that the vessel of the State was sensibly staggering under its weight. When we came to close quarters with full-grown criminals, we found that neglected children are the raw material out of which they grow. Efforts were put forth by individuals, societies, and the legislature, to mitigate or arrest the evil. Hence the ragged schools and kindred institutions which have of late years occupied so large a share of the public attention, and which characterize the philanthropy of the day. The opinion boldly proclaimed by some distinguished Christian patriots, That no man has a right to rear a young savage in his house, and let him loose when full-bodied to prey upon a civilized community, seems to be making its way toward general acceptance. It is conceded that when parents cannot, or will not educate their children, the nation may and should, in its own interest, effectually interfere. The disputes that have arisen respect not the principle, but the best method of carrying it into practice. Slowly and painfully the confession has been wrung from an afflicted and penitent people, that to ply the gallows and the penal colonies for the punishment of convicted malefactors is only the left-hand side of national duty; while we permit careless or profligate parents to inundate society with a brood of young Anakim, a hybrid compound of animal strength and moral imbecility. The double conviction is taking possession of the popular mind, and

already expressing itself in imperial legislation, that the nation in its collective capacity should come to the rescue, and that the rescue can be effected only by a thorough and universal education of the young. We live in an active and hopeful time. Life does not stagnate for want of movement. There is room for all—for the man of thought, and the man of labour—for all who have talents, and all the talents of each. We need a spark of truth from the head of the wise, and a push from the arm of the strong—one contribution to the direction of the movement, and another to its force. To draw the country out of the slough in which it has deeply settled down, we need a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together.

We must not deceive ourselves by accepting a shadow for the substance. A general confession that the thing ought to be done is not the doing of the thing. The kind of evil spirit that possesses the outcast, neglected youth of the kingdom, will not go out before a blast of words, whether spoken or printed. After all that has been said, the greater part of the work remains to be done. The number of children undergoing a training into evil, is at once the greatest disgrace and the greatest danger to the commonwealth. The most formidable barrier, however, which impedes practical reformation is neither the inertia of parliament nor the intolerance of sects, but the short-sighted selfishness of human hearts. It costs something to keep our outcast brother in a course of training from childhood into adolescence, and therefore under various pretexts we shuffle the obligation off. The

sin most surely finds us out, and exacts a fourfold retribution, but we are not prudent enough to foresee the evil and hide from it betimes in measures of prevention. Even the machinery which has been erected for the accomplishment of this work is left in part unemployed, not for want of the raw material, but to save the expense of the operation. Corporations and communities, penny wise and pound foolish, save their money, and leave the lost little ones lying in the nation's skirts, like the cannon balls which they sew up in the hasty winding-sheet of those who die at sea, a dead-weight to make the body sink. The guardians of a union may stave off an assessment by making strait the gate of entrance to the industrial school;* but out of the ashes of every such crushed request a sturdier applicant springs up, whose demands they will be compelled to grant,—whose heaviest drafts they will be compelled to honour. It is easy to abandon feeble infants, but when abandoned children have grown wicked men, their voice must be heard, and their weight will be felt. Crime and punishment constitute the awful Nemesis of our neglect. Train up a child in the way he should go, while he is a child. For that specific work, now only is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.

2. The process of education,—"*Train up* a child." Of

* I have myself danced attendance on a police magistrates' court from day to day, according to successive appointments by the officials, provided with witnesses and the person of the culprit, in the hope of rescuing a fatherless child from a training in beggary by her own mother; and have been compelled to retire from the conflict baffled and disgusted, because agents of parochial boards protected successfully the cash-box of their constituents.

late years much attention has been directed to the distinction between teaching and training. The effort was needed, and has been useful. The tendency in a former age to pile up reading, writing, and a few other kindred arts, and call them education, was superficial in its philosophy, and disastrous in its practical results. There cannot be training without teaching; but there may be teaching without training. The various branches of knowledge which the teacher imparts constitute as it were the elements which the trainer employs. They are the types skilfully cast, and lying in the fount before him; but they have little meaning, and less power, until they have been arranged in his frame, and submitted to his press. Moral training according to a divine standard, with the view of moulding the human being, while yet young and tender, into right principles and habits of action, and using up in its processes all kinds and degrees of information within its reach, is the only education worthy of the name. So much has of late been done in this department, and so familiar have all the intelligent portion of the community become with the subject, that though it comes most naturally in our way, we do not think it necessary in this place either to explain what moral training is, or to enforce its paramount importance in education.

The oldest training school is still the best. Home is the best school-room, sisters and brothers the best class-fellows, parents the best masters. The chief value of those charitable institutions for the training of the young which characterize and honour our age, consists in sup-

plying the lack of home education. These schools deserve all the praise that has been bestowed on them; but it is on the principle that when the best has entirely failed, the next best is very precious. When limbs are broken, hospitals are excellent; but it would have been better both for the patients and the community if hospitals had not been needed. To make well in the industrial school is good; but to keep well in the home is better,—is best. We speak specifically of training, the highest department of education. As to its subordinate materials, the arts of reading and writing, and the like, parents even in the best state of society do well to avail themselves of professional aid; but themselves should preside over the process, and with their own hearts and hands labour to get the whole, while soft, cast into a heavenly mould of truth and righteousness. Let any one and every one help in spreading a sail and catching a breeze, but let the parent keep the helm in his own hands.

Formidable obstacles, both intrinsic and extrinsic, prevent or impede parental training. In some cases personal deficiencies, in others the pressure of circumstances from without, and in many both barriers combined, stand in the way of the work. But in all these the beautiful law of providence appears, that good principles and habits, as well as bad, count kin and help each other. Suppose a father and mother personally deficient, but desiring to have their children trained to truth and righteousness, —observe how the various portions of the machinery work together for good. In giving them children, and filling their hearts with parental love, God has supplied

them at once with the best exercise for improvement and the most powerful motive to urge them on. Love to the little ones will make them try the training, and each trial will increase their capacity for the work. Every effort to train their children will elevate themselves; and every degree of elevation to which they attain will be an addition to their power of doing good to the children. God's good gifts run in circles. An entrance into his family in the spirit of adoption secures for you the benefit of them all. If you should certainly know that in five years hence your boy, who is now a little child, would fall into a deep river all alone, you would not wait till the event should happen ere you prepared to meet it. You would begin now the process which would be safety then. Your child cannot swim, and you are not qualified to teach him; but forthwith you would acquire the art yourself, that you might communicate it to him, and that he might be prepared to meet the emergency. Now beyond all peradventure your child, if he survive, will in a few years be plunged into a sea of wickedness, through which he must swim for his life. Nothing but right moral principles, obtained from the Bible, and indurated by early training into a confirmed habit, will give him the necessary buoyancy. Hence, as you would preserve your child from sinking through the sea of sin into final perdition, you are bound to qualify yourself for training him up in the way he should go.

In like manner when the obstacles are extrinsic, the necessities of his child supply the parent with motives to exert himself for their removal; and the effort which he

makes for his child will rebound in blessings on himself. For example, if a parent has, through carelessness or a supposed necessity, adopted a line of life which demands Sabbath-day labour, or late hours all the week, he will discover, as his children grow up, that his business is incompatible with his duty to them. If, from love to his family and enlightened desire for their welfare, he successfully shake off the bondage, and obtain the means of living without giving the Lord's day or the evening hours to labour, he has thereby secured a double boon,—to his children and to himself.

Sabbath-school instruction, although good as far as it goes, does not supply adequate moral education for the juvenile hordes which infest the streets of our large cities. The interval between Sabbath and Sabbath is too wide. It is like spreading a net with meshes seven inches wide instead of one, before a shoal of herrings. By the great gap of the week, the little Arabs easily slip through, in spite of the stout string which you extend across their path on the Sabbath evening. Ply the work by all means, and ply it hopefully. Labour for the Lord in that department will not be lost. Saving truth is thereby deposited in many minds, which the Spirit of God will make fruitful in a future day. Ply the work of Sabbath schools, but let not the existence and abundance of these efforts deceive us into the belief that the work is adequately done. The Sabbath school cannot train up a child. The six days' training at home, if it be evil, will, in the battle of life, carry it over the one day's teaching in the school, however good it may be.

3. The aim and end of education,—"Train up a child *in the way he should go.*" This is the most important of the three. Wisdom in choosing the proper time, and skill in adopting the best method, would be of no avail if false principles were thereby instilled into the mind, and evil habits ingrafted on the life. If you are in the wrong way, the more vigorously you prosecute the journey the sooner will disaster come. If we do not train the children in Truth and Righteousness, it would be better that we should not train them at all. Here, at the very outset, we meet full in the face the old question, "What is truth?" The Teacher to whom Pilate petulantly put the question will give us the answer, if we reverently sit at his feet: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Christ is the truth, and the Scriptures the standard by which truth may be known. This is not only religiously the best solution of the question, but philosophically the only solution that can be given. If we do not adopt the Bible as our standard in training the young, combined training is impossible. If in moral principles every man is his own lawgiver, there is no law at all, and no authority. You may train a fruit-tree by nailing its branches to a wall, or tying them to an espalier railing; but the tree whose branches have nothing to lean on but air is not trained at all. It is not a dispute between the Scriptures and some other rival standard, for no such standard exists or is proposed. It is a question between the Bible as a standard, and no standard at all. But training without an acknowledged standard is nothing—

is an empty form of words, by which ingenious men amuse themselves. There are some who would borrow from the Bible whatever moral principles they have, and yet are unwilling to own the Scriptures, in their integrity, as an authority binding the conscience; because, if it is binding in one thing, it is binding in all.

We assume, then, that if moral training has any substantial existence, it is a training according to the rule and under the authority of the Bible, as the revealed will of God. In efficient training these two things are absolutely necessary,—a *rule* to show the ignorant what the way is, and an *authority* to keep the wayward on it. A thread extended in the air between two points is a sufficient rule for those who need nothing but a rule, and by such a line, accordingly, the builder rears his wall; but an extended thread pointing out the boundary between your garden and your neighbour's is not sufficient where children and ripe fruit are brought into contact. Besides a mark to let them see where their neighbour's property is, a wall is needed to keep them out of it. In the Scriptures, received and revered as the inspired word of God for the whole duty of man, we have at once a conspicuous rule and a supreme authority. Those who practically neglect or theoretically oppose that word, have bereft themselves both of the knowledge and the power necessary in the moral training of youth. They have neither a line to let the honest see the right way, nor a sanction to prevent the dishonest from transgressing it.

The adverse argument of theorists, although it opens up an interesting field of speculation, does not in practice

exert much power. The objection to scriptural doctrine in the training of the young proceeds upon the assumption that, if you imbue the mind with opinions before the judgment is capable of independently sifting the evidence, the ultimate issue cannot be a reasonable service. The difficulty so pressed emits an imposing sound, but its heart is hollow and its sides are thin. It collapses under the slightest rub. To leave the mind throughout childhood without prepossessions in regard to religious truth is simply impossible. The question does not lie between furnishing the mind with opinions in youth, and leaving it empty. Left empty it cannot be. We are limited to the alternative of filling it with the sifted wheat of truth, or abandoning it to be filled with the flying chaff of various error. If you do not employ the revealed doctrines of the Bible as an authoritative rule in the training of your child, you have not maintained neutrality: you have decided for your child against the authority of the Bible. When he has, under your training, grown up to manhood without God in the world, you cannot bring him back to the softness of childhood again, to correct the error, if error there has been. We are shut up to the necessity of making a choice for the moral training of our children, as certainly as we are shut up to the necessity of choosing the kind of food by which their bodies shall be sustained.

But further: the argument which proves that we should not commit the child according to our opinion, proves too much, and therefore proves nothing. The principle would compel you to leave the child untaught on many other

points besides the doctrines of revealed religion. The youth whose intellect has been highly educated from childhood, may in maturity adopt the opinion that such education is an evil, and that he would have been happier if he had grown up a worse philosopher and a robuster man. But he is committed for ever by the choice of his parents. The effects of that choice cannot be removed. The same reasoning holds good even in matters more exclusively physical. On the same supposition you have no right to determine for your child the kind of food and clothing to which his frame shall be habituated, for that choice once made can never in its effects be reversed. The child could not judge; you judged for him; and the man is bound all his days by your decision. Some sort of training, both physical and moral, you must give the child, and you are bound to give him that which in your judgment is best, for he is incapable of forming a judgment for himself.

A Chinese parent compresses his child's feet, by shoes of peculiar shape and diminutive size. An African parent covers his child's face with fantastic markings, and stamps them indelibly in the flesh. Both operations are useless and cruel. They thwart the purposes of God, and leave a blemish on his beautiful work. These parents sin in thus disfiguring for life the bodies of their children. They err; but wherein does the error lie? Not in the fact of forming a judgment as to the treatment of their infants, but in forming a judgment that is false and injurious. In this enlightened community every parent, by aid of professional skill, performs a painful operation on the

body of his infant. He makes a wound in the flesh, and into that wound insinuates a drop of poisonous fluid. The poison circulates through the blood. A fever ensues, and an unsightly sore grows over the wound, leaving a permanent mark in the skin. You find no fault with the parent for all this. Why? Because he thereby diminishes greatly the risk of a dangerous disease. The operation is useful. The judgment that dictated it was sound. This shows on what ground the Chinese and African should be condemned. If you say they went beyond their province when they took it upon themselves to judge for others to the effect of indenting indelible marks upon their flesh, you include in your condemnation those parents who, with the most enlightened affection, inoculate their children to preserve them from small-pox. Both in the physical and moral departments the error lies, not in forming a judgment and carrying it out, but in forming and executing an erroneous judgment. The court is competent, if the sentence be according to truth.

But the moral training of children is much more effectually obstructed by the dead-weight of indifference which will not do it, than by the theoretic opposition which argues that it should not be done. An erroneous principle may be met by argument—may be neutralized by diffused truth; but what can argument do against the inertia of parents who, in thousands and tens of thousands, eat and drink and sleep, leaving their children to nature and chance, as trees of the forest or beasts of the field?

In this department much remains to be done. Our

position, nationally, is not high in the godly upbringing of the young at present; but one good symptom is, that we have of late been in some measure awakened to observe and confess our defects. In the meantime three classes of persons amongst us should be supported by all the help that human arms can offer, and cheered by all the hopes that can be brought from heaven. These are, (1.) Those parents who devote themselves at home to the training of their own children in the way of truth and goodness; (2.) Those who prosecute household missionary work in lapsed and listless families; and (3.) Those who, by combined effort and on a large scale, gather outcast children into schools, whether on the Lord's day or throughout the week, and there nobly do their best to heal again the wounds which other hands have already made.

It is a blessed employment to be leading little ones to Jesus. We know that it is a service with which the Lord himself is well pleased. These neglected wanderers when gathered in, constitute the kingdom, and satisfy the soul of the King. To gather them is honourable work. It is a "well-doing" of which Christians should never weary.

XXVIII.

THE BONDAGE OF THE BORROWER.

"The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender."—xxii. 7.

THE law is laid down in general terms, that it may be freely modified in its application by the circumstances of each case. It is not written, Thou shalt not borrow; or, Thou shalt not lend. The text describes the practical consequences of the act, and leaves every reader to judge for himself whether his circumstances permit or require him to come under their influence. In some cases it may be right to borrow, and in others it is certainly wrong: this text does not cut the knot and make morality easy by an authoritative permission on the one side, or an authoritative prohibition on the other. It is an instance of the reserve which is a common characteristic of Scripture. Minute directions are not given for the conduct of daily life. Principles are laid down and tendencies indicated. From these every man must construct a working plan for himself, according to the analogy of faith and the testimony of conscience.

A book of medicine, emanating from the highest authority, distinctly describes the effects of a certain stimulant, when administered internally, upon the human body. It quickens the circulation, and stirs all the vital functions into a greater than their normal activity; but when the

effect of the potion has passed away, a lassitude supervenes, which brings down the patient's strength to a lower point than that at which it stood before the application of the stimulant. The medicine adds nothing to the permanent resources of the system, but gives you the command of a stronger impulse for a time, on condition of full repayment, and something to boot, as the price of the accommodation. Already we know certainly that this article of the pharmacopœia may in peculiar circumstances be useful as a medicine, but can never in any case be available as food. A man may be so situated that the power of making an extraordinary effort for an hour will be worth purchasing at the price of an exhaustion many degrees below his normal condition during the whole of the following day. In such a case temporary resort to the medicine may be a lawful expedient. But no circumstances can possibly make it wise or safe to administer or use it from day to day as an ordinary article of food.

The expedient to which the "borrower" resorts in his difficulty is precisely such a stimulant. It is not necessarily and in all cases evil. It is a medicine, but not food. It may sometimes be administered with good effect at the crisis of the pecuniary distress. But such is the character of this substance, that you cannot safely employ it as a curative agent at all, unless you secure the highest professional advice as to the prescription at first, and exercise the most scrupulous care afterwards in the actual administration of the dose. Thus prescribed and thus administered it is lawful and useful. It is one of those good things of God which watchful disciples may receive

with thankfulness, and use with profit. When you have taken into consideration the character and capacity of the individual who requires the stimulant, the kind and extent of the losses that have temporarily placed him in straits, and the prospects of trade at the time, generally in the community and particularly in his own department—when you have considered and compared all these elements, and found that the stoppage is only a momentary faint in a sound constitution, by all means administer the draught: but watch the patient while he is under its influence, and bring him back as soon as possible to his ordinary regimen. If he begin to like the stimulant, and the dreamy comfort which it supplies; if he manifest a tendency to resort to another dose, as soon as the effects of the last begin to wear away,—the symptoms are alarming. The patient has acquired a morbid appetite for the medicine. The cure has become more dangerous to him than the disease.

There is a remarkably close analogy between the expedient of borrowing money in a temporary strait, and the expedient of borrowing for the moment from your own future store by means of opium or ardent spirits. There is a likeness in the usefulness and power of the expedients when skilfully applied at the crisis of an ailment; a likeness in the tendency to undue repetition of the stimulants, often begotten in the patient by their use; and a likeness in the wretched life-long bondage to which the victim is reduced when that which at first was occasionally resorted to as a medicine has become necessary to him as daily food.

When an honest and industrious man has been thrown into pecuniary distress by a series of adverse circumstances which he could neither foresee nor avert, he may —he should cast about for some one who can, by a loan, help him over the chasm which has suddenly opened across his path and forbids his progress. When a man of worth has fallen into such a strait, he generally finds some one able and willing to do a brother's turn. In this lower sphere of temporal things, they who wait upon the Lord are often enabled to renew their strength. In this department, they who observe wisely the course of events, may often see and taste the loving-kindness of the Lord. Having frankly grasped in his weakness a brother's offered arm, he puts all his energies to their utmost stretch, in order to reach at the earliest moment an independent footing, where he can stand alone again. This done, he takes his own burden upon his own shoulders, and sets his benefactor free. It is well. He fell into distress. He applied a remedy. The remedy was successful. He is thankful for the relief which it gave him, but he has no desire to continue the application of the remedy. He casts it away as the convalescent casts away his drugs, glad that he had them in the time of need, but as glad to get quit of them when the time of need is past. This hearty, conclusive repudiation of the labelled bottles that stood in rows in his sick-room is one symptom that the cure is complete. The tendency, wherever it is manifested, to continue sipping at the stimulant or narcotic draught, is evidence that if the patient has been relieved of one disease, he has in the

process contracted a worse. The honest man who borrowed in a time of need, never breathes freely till he is standing on his own feet, and working his own way again. "Owe no man anything," sounded in his ears as long as he was in debt; and he felt that he could not answer to the Lord whose word it is, if he should indolently neglect any opportunity of reducing it. His fear of God and his regard for man conspire to strain every nerve in the effort to be free.

But there is in the community a numerous class whose normal condition is debt. If at the first they took borrowed money, as they might take opium, a medicine to relieve an acute disease, which would not yield to other means, they chew it now every day and all day, as the staff of their life. The appetite has become like a second nature. Whenever real life touches the dreamer roughly, he opens his eyes languidly, takes another pill, and sleeps himself into the fool's paradise again, until the next jolt disturbs his ignoble slumbers. This disease is prevalent in the community. There are dealers of various grades who seem to count debt their element. They live in it. They do not expect to get out of it. They scarcely wish —at least they never energetically strive to get out. They borrow and spend, and borrow again, in a weary unvarying circle. If they lose, the loss falls on others, for they never possess anything which is really their own. The disease is chronic, and the patient in some sense actually likes to be in it. To him the negative condition of debt affords fewer cares than would the positive possession of wealth. A community cannot

thrive in which this habit of life largely prevails: a family is wretched whose daily supply is filtered through this unhealthy medium. A soul cannot grow in grace while the lower life is steeped in this stagnant element.

Besides the ravages which it commits in the higher sphere of commerce, this vice is spreading among the labouring poor, and weakening society by eating into its foundations. The difference between a workman who pays his way as he goes, and a workman who lives on credit, is in one aspect very small, and in another very great. A very small sum of money saved or squandered, and a very slight personal effort made or refused, will turn the balance and determine whether of the two conditions shall be yours; but though the antecedents of the two conditions lie so near each other, their consequences are far apart. A very little, in the way of cause, will place a man in this position or in that; but this position will produce to its occupant, in the way of effect, a life of comfort, and that position a life of misery. A little makes the difference; but the difference which that little makes is very great.

Morally and materially the habit of borrowing is to a working man and his family an incalculable evil. It is eminently a demoralizing habit. The man who indulges it loses by degrees the power to keep a shilling in his pocket. The winsome but delicate bloom of self-respect is soon worn off. By giving up the exercise, you soon destroy the power of foresight. The capacity of self-denial is destroyed and the reins flung loose on the neck of indul-

gence. Such is the blighting influence of this habit that no virtue can live in its atmosphere.

As it is morally a vice, it is economically a blunder. Here the truth of the text comes most clearly out, that the borrower is servant to the lender; and a degrading service it is. If the workman borrows from his employer, he is enslaved to the capitalist, and has lost the power of maintaining his own rights. If he borrows from a shopkeeper, he has thrown away the privilege of buying in the cheapest market. The vice is reduced to a system in large communities, and cultivated as a trade. It is a wound received in life's stern battle, and left without a bandage to fester in the sun: it affords food and feasting to a horde of vermin, but wastes the poor soldier's life away.

Two mechanics are employed in the same factory, and live with their families in contiguous dwellings. From the one house, at certain stated seasons, the wife and mother issues forth with money in her hand to purchase necessaries for her household: from the other, the wife and mother steals out at irregular intervals and untimely hours to borrow the means of satisfying her children's hunger. Into both houses the same amount of weekly wages comes; but twenty shillings laid out bring more comfort into this house than into that. The buyer goes to any shop that pleases her, and takes there the articles which she judges cheap and good. The borrower is led by an agent to the shopkeeper who is willing to part with his goods without receiving their price. The merchant who sells on credit to such a class of customers needs a

large profit, and takes it. The article is dearer to the borrower than it is to the buyer, and not so good. The agent must be paid too for seeking out the customer, and it is the customer who pays for being sought out. The borrower is the lender's slave. The servant is impoverished, and probably in the long-run the master is not enriched.

When the system is fully elaborated, the agent prowls about during the day, when the wives are idle and the husbands absent, baiting his hook, and getting its barb insinuated into the victim's gills. He gives a showy article in hand, which the woman may wear to-morrow, although she has not a penny wherewith to pay for it. Her name is inscribed in his book under an obligation to pay one shilling every week, until the payments reach a pound,—this sum being considered sufficient to cover material, agency, risk, and interest. Ten or twelve weeks in succession the poor woman wends her way to the appointed place and deposits her shilling. Then the gaudy garment disappears from her shoulders. Perhaps the pawnbroker's shelves could give some account of it. She has not now the comfort of possession. When the article is off her back, the shilling slips from her memory. The payments are interrupted one day—one hour beyond the stipulated time. At this opening a pair of pincers, diabolically prepared beforehand, are introduced, to tear out the pound of flesh according as it is in the bond. They are constructed thus: Certain messengers, or sheriff's officers, in league with the agent and sharers of the spoil, come in with a summons to the small debt court. Decreet, as a matter of course, goes against the defaulter,

expenses and all. A large portion of the expenses consists of fees to these officers. If, in addition to the principal, the names of two securities have been attached to the bond, each is served with a summons, and a triple profit accrues. Business and pay are thus created for the company, and the miserable borrower serves the associated lenders as the worn-out camel serves the watchful vultures, when the caravan has passed and left it lying still living on the sand. One form of human vice suggests and sustains another. As long as men will fight and kill each other in thousands, creatures in human form will follow the trail of armies, and prowl on the battle-field at night, stripping the dead, and occasionally, perhaps, giving the finishing stroke to the dying. As long as the improvidence of multitudes shall provide the carcass, harpies will hover overhead, and make a bold swoop down for a morsel as often as an opportunity occurs. Nor is it to be expected, considering their character and calling, that when the victim is helplessly prostrate, they will always be scrupulously conscientious in waiting till the breath go out. The rank corruption that has been allowed to creep over the economic condition of the people, allures and harbours these loathsome night birds. The evils are deeply seated and widely spread,—only one cure can fully meet the malady; but the evils lean on each other, and to cut the roots of one would impede the progress of the rest.

We have already said that a very small amount of money and effort would suffice to turn the scale, and give the borrower all the buyer's vantage-ground. Of time a

week, of money twenty shillings sterling,—this is all external to the men, that constitutes the interval between them. In a fishing village, on the margin of an estuary through which one of our larger rivers pours itself into the sea, live two labouring men. On each is laid the task of pulling his boat with the produce of certain fisheries daily up the river, to a market town about fifteen miles inland. One starts with the flowing tide, and returns on its receding wave. The other delays his departure till the tide has turned. A single mistake insures a double misfortune. The sluggard must contend against the stream in his upward voyage, and the tide has set in against him again ere he is ready to return. These two men accomplish the same distance in a day, and over the same course; but the task of the one is easy, and the task of the other hard. Such is the difference between the workman who, having fallen behind the world once, remains behind it always, and the workman who begins by paying his way, and has always the means of paying it. One effort, one sacrifice, and instead of running hither and thither with your wages to pay the debts of the past, you have the money free in your hand to command the market for the time to come. This could easily be accomplished, but the character which would keep matters right when they are right is not so easily attained. Although you should give the borrower a sum of money sufficient to pay all his debts, he will soon be deeper in debt than ever. Unless the moral principle be implanted, and the provident habit formed, no amount of material contribution can improve the condition of the

people. Wealth and charity in league cannot do it. Although mountains of gold and silver were thrown into the chasm, it would gape as dark and wide as before. In this matter as in others we must adopt the Lord's way, and employ his instruments. Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will in no wise depart from it.

These things are more intimately connected with spiritual religion than the reader at first sight may suppose. If one should say in regard to the natural history of animals, Let us have the life of the living creature, and we care not what may be the constituents of the element in which it dwells,—you would not count him a discriminating observer. No less does he miss the mark who, in efforts for the regeneration of the people, concerns himself only with their faith in Christ, and neglects, as irrelevant, the economics of their homes.

Spiritual life, we confess, is the one thing above all others needful for the dead in sin; but that life will not thrive—that life cannot be in an alien element. The double difficulty of paying an old debt and contracting a new one is precisely "the care of this life" which will most effectually choke the word and make it unfruitful. When Moses proclaimed to Israel in Egypt the richest promises of God, it is expressly recorded that "they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage" (Exod. vi. 9). The consolation which the lawgiver brought to them from the treasures of divine grace was the very medicine which their broken hearts needed; but these hearts were so crushed by oppression that they

could not take the consolation in. The perplexity of the Hebrews when they were compelled to make bricks without straw could not be greater than that of a labouring man in one of our cities, with hungry children round him, and his wages all spent before they are won. The pawnbroker and his kin are harder masters than any Pharaoh that ever ruled in Egypt. When the borrower is conclusively subjected to the lender's yoke, his bondage is more irksome than that under which ancient Israel groaned. The perennial anguish which accompanies this economic dislocation forbids the approach of saving truth to the soul that needs it most. The new life, begotten by the Spirit and growing into strength, would prevail to cure the economic derangement; but reciprocally, an improved condition of the household economics would powerfully work together with more direct means to kindle and cherish the spiritual life.

Can these dry bones live? They may; but it is when the Spirit of the Lord breathes life into them. Reformation will not do. Regeneration is needed.

XXIX.

CONVENIENT FOOD.

"When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat."—xxiii. 1–3.

FORTY years ago, on the banks of the River Earn, five or six miles above its confluence with the Tay, an elderly countryman, the tenant of a small farm, sat on a mossy bank beneath the shade of a beech-tree, and ate from his own knee the dinner which his boy, then playing beside him, had brought at the appointed hour to the field of labour. A gentle breeze fanned gratefully the branches of the sheltering tree, and the grizzled locks on the bared head of the labourer. Fleecy clouds were flying slowly over a back-ground of blue sky, and answering shadows flitting across the waving fields of hay and corn. At that moment the lord of the manor passed by. Too kind-hearted to turn aside, and too polite to interrupt the meal of his tenant friend, he said without stopping as he passed, in tones as gentle as a mother's when she soothes her child to sleep,—"Well, Robert, you are dining." "Yes, my lord," replied Robert, with the usual elevation of the hand in token of respect, and glancing upward through the beechen boughs to the glorious canopy beyond,—"Yes, my lord, and I have an elegant dining-room." A suppressed smile could be seen playing about his lordship's

lips, as he stalked forward with stately step in his wonted solitary, silent roam. I was there the only witness. My memory faithfully records the scene and recalls the laconic colloquy. The facts were deeply planted in my mind at the time, but the philosophy did not begin to bud till long afterward. The only effect which the great man's approach produced on me was to make me leave the chased butterfly uncaught, and the coveted wild-flower unplucked, and creep close to my protector, holding in my breath till "my lord" was out of sight. Since that period, and especially since both the interlocutors have passed away from the stage, I have often recalled that and similar interviews that passed under my observation, and thought with a sigh, how happy this country would be in its domestic condition, and how mighty in its foreign relations, if the several classes of society through all its borders were knit to each other by bonds as soft and strong as these. Two and thirty years these two lived in the relation of landlord and tenant. During that period the rent was never changed, and never in arrear. In their intercourse the superior was never haughty, the inferior never presuming. The one maintained all the dignity of the noble, the other all the self-respect of the man. When the tenant died in a good old age, the landlord, himself by that time advanced in years, mourned for the loss of a friend, and said with tears that his patrimonial fields were growing less lovely as the old occupiers were, one by one, departing.

The dining-room was such as nature only could provide, and the dinner was all that nature needed. When

an appetite such as hay-making begets in a healthful frame turns the plainest fare into a luxury, the maximum of both pleasure and utility in eating is attained. An ignoble warfare is waged, an ignoble race is run, when people strive to make up for the failing appetite of the indolent eater by elaborate refinements in the ingredients and preparation of the food. Luxury makes the senses dull, and then intenser luxury is needed to penetrate into the quick of these dull senses. On either side men strive to produce and maintain a right relation between the appetite and the food. On this side, rich fools strive by culinary art to raise the savour of the viands to such a point of pungency that they shall produce lively sensations of pleasure on a worn and weary palate. On that side, the wise, whether rich or poor, by exercise and temperance easily bring healthful hunger up to such a pitch that it finds sweetest luxury in the hardest fare. In this matter the multitude are not left to their own judgment. They are in better hands. Labour and open air are imposed upon them whether they will or not, for their good. Our Father in heaven cares for them as for children. Delicate dishes, fitted to provoke into activity the languid desire, cannot be provided for the majority of men: the other alternative is the better of the two. Where there is not wealth to season the food, there is labour to invigorate the appetite. Here is yet another point at which the rich and the poor meet together. Setting aside exceptional cases from both classes, it will probably be conceded by all dispassionate observers, that the poor on the whole enjoy as

much pleasure through the sense of taste from their food as the rich.

The first specific warning on the subject which the Proverbs contain, is given in these three verses. The case supposed is that of a ruler—a man of wealth and luxurious habits—who prepares a feast and invites his friends. The guests are enjoined to consider well the delicacies that are set before them, and beware of excess. The two elements which constitute the danger are both taken into account. These are, the weakness of the tempted and the strength of the temptation. Coarse fare tends to check the excesses of an inordinate appetite: and a subdued appetite makes you safe with the most luxurious food. The danger is doubled where both the elements meet—when a ruler spreads a tempting feast, and the guest is a man given to appetite.

It is of the Lord that hunger is painful, and food gives pleasure. Between these two lines of defence the Creator has placed life, with a view to its preservation. If eating had been as painful as it is pleasant to our nature, the disagreeable duty would have been frequently forgotten or neglected, and the world, if peopled at all, would have been peopled by tribes of walking skeletons. The arrangement which provides that the necessary reception of aliment into the system gives pleasure to the senses, is wise and good. It is an ungrateful return for our Maker's kindness when the creature turns his bounty into licentiousness. The due sustenance of the body is the Creator's end; the pleasantness of food the means of attaining it. When men prosecute and cultivate that

pleasure as an end, they thwart the very purposes of Providence. When the pleasure is pursued as an object, it ceases to serve effectually as a means of healthfully maintaining the living frame.

When the appetite is strong, and the food enticing, the danger of sinning and suffering is great,—greater than most of us care to observe, and acknowledge to ourselves. The warning here is strongly expressed, and all its strength is needed. "Put a knife to thy throat," is in form similar to the injunctions of the great Teacher, to pluck out the offending right eye, and cut off the offending right hand. "Be not desirous of his dainties, for they are deceitful meat." They are of set purpose made deceitful. They are prepared by an artist of skill, whose whole life is devoted to the study. Resisting virtue in the guests must be strong indeed, for the temptation is as powerful as wealth and experience can make it.

Although there is much poverty in the community there is also much wealth. Wherever there is much wealth there is much luxury. Some forms of luxury are much more dignified and safe than others. We speak here of one form only, one that lies near the bottom of the scale. Great feasts are a ready outlet for great riches; and in this way, accordingly, those who have much money and little refinement relieve themselves of their surplus. I am well aware that in this matter much depends on circumstances, and an absolute rule is not possible. I shall not, by descending into the details of the kitchen and the dining-room, give the culprit an opportunity of laughing down the reproof. I cannot come down to dis-

pute with epicures about the number of dishes and the ingredients of each. With my footing firm on the higher platform, I can deal a more effective blow. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." "Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." This is the authority on which we stand: these are the rules which we prescribe. Let these rules be laid along the feasts of the wealthy, and their dimensions will be curtailed.

In this department of practical duty, as in many others, innocence and guilt are not divided from each other by a visible partition-wall rising sheer up between them. They meet on each other's margin as the colours of the rainbow meet. In all cases it is a matter of degrees. The point of optimism is not fixed. It moves from side to side with the internal constitution of the individual, and the condition of society around him. If it were not so, there would be a defect in the moral discipline of men. The dividing line is not such as to force itself on the notice of those who do not look for it. They who seek shall find it; they who do not seek shall miss it. The law of the greatest good in the sustenance of our bodies is, like God its author, the rewarder of them that diligently seek it.

To sit two dreary hours, as if pinioned to your chair and your neighbour, in a room kept steaming with hot viands, chasing each other out and in,—to have so many dishes of diverse flavours placed under your nostrils in quick succession, that, unless your gastric stability be above the average, you cannot comfortably partake of any

one,—to have your ears filled meantime with matter not much more ethereal than that which occupies your other senses,—all this I would be disposed to shun as an endurance, rather than accept as a favour. The money is not well laid out. The time is not profitably spent. Unnecessary cares are laid on the heads of the house, and unnecessary labour on the servants. Worst of all, the mind is clogged by all that goes beyond the sufficient supply of nature's need. In greater or less measure, the dipping into these manifold and artfully-prepared meats impedes the soul in its flight, as when the feet of a winged insect are immersed in mud. We have need for all our mental power always. The soul needs all its buoyancy to bear home the precious freight, and should not be willingly weighed down by such vile ballast. Simplicity in these things both imparts the highest pleasure and brings in the richest profit. Simplicity is both godly and manly. Religion prescribes, philosophy approves simplicity.

XXX.

THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

"Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them."—xxii. 22, 23.

"Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: for their Redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee."—xxiii. 10, 11.

THE margin of the Forth opposite Edinburgh is fringed for several miles by a broad belt of trees, very lofty and very luxuriant, as these matters go in this northern clime. The line of the shore at the spot is partly a curving bay, and partly a rocky, precipitous headland. A straight arched avenue of beeches, dimly lighted in the day-time through the telescopic opening on the sky at its farther extremity, might seem the vestibule of some vast temple not made with hands of men, yet sacred to the worship of the Creator. Labyrinths of shaded walks,—now straight, now curving,—now closed on both sides by thickets, and now exposing suddenly a solitary sail on the glittering sea or the spires of the distant city,—persuade the urban visitant that he is approaching the forbidden precints of some feudal palace. Yet the people of all ranks pass and repass unchallenged. No liveried warder is seen watching for trespassers. At either end the visitor enters by a breach in a substantial stone wall of recent workmanship. The sides of the gateways are not squared by the tool of the mason. Both openings are

ragged disruptions, as if the walls had been blown up by gunpowder or breached by cannon shot, to make way for an assaulting column. Why this mark of war in a scene over which a perfect peace is brooding? Thereby hangs a tale. There was a war, and the peace which now prevails is the fruit of victory.

A few years ago, the great proprietors of the neighbourhood, believing that their rights were absolute, built the public out by a massive wall of stone and lime. The people quickly burst the barriers and regained possession. But they did not stop there. They organized, procured funds, and tried the case in the courts of law. They were successful, and secured for themselves and posterity the unchallenged right to one of the finest marine promenades that the varied coast-line of our island supplies. Peasants, artisans, and merchants, mothers and children, young men and maidens, tread promiscuously these stately avenues, with the firm step and upward look of the free. The neighbouring nobles have not a surer right to their castles and estates. An attempt was made, in good faith, but in ignorance, to remove an ancient landmark. It failed. The rights of the poor were defended successfully against the encroachments of the rich.

To whom did the feeble owe their victory over the strong? A court of law, you will say, and no feudal superior, threw its broad shield over them. It did: but the real cause of the event lies deeper. A mightier Redeemer espouses the cause of the poor in this land. The liberty of the subject is secured by a more ancient charter than that which constitutes the Court of Session. The

Bible is the true *Magna Charta* of British freedom. Courts of law were established in this land at a time when the Bible was under ban, and what did our forefathers gain by the privilege? Courts of law did not then protect the property and person of the poor from the grasp of the powerful. They dispensed law, but not justice. The triumph of true religion brought in the era of equal rights. When the conscience was emancipated from the thraldom of the priest, the property was secure from the aggression of the noble. When the people placed themselves under the law of God, they no longer suffered from the lawlessness of men.

There is a causal connection, and not merely a coincidence, between the spread of God's word and the security of men's rights in a land. This may be demonstrated either by examining the contents of the Book, or by reading its history. I know of no country really free in which the Bible is laid under restraint, and no country enslaved where the Bible is free. Some have zealously advocated the rights of man, and striven at the same time to throw discredit on the Scriptures. The double labour was labour lost. To undermine the foundation does not contribute to the stability of the superstructure. To blot out the first table of the Decalogue is not the best way of enforcing the second. If you teach that a man may have no god, or any god, or all gods, you cannot thereafter so effectually bring home the commandments, "Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet."

Living creatures, the most noxious and loathsome, have instincts ever true to guide them in their effort to

preserve their own life. Such are systems of despotism. While they know not and do not good, they know unerringly what will destroy or preserve themselves. Deceitful in all else, they may be trusted for one thing—for knowing surely, and warding off vigorously, whatever would endanger their own existence. With the true instinct of self-preservation, tyrants, great and small, cast or keep out Bibles from their territory. The operation of this principle has embodied in the history and jurisprudence of nations the most convincing evidence that the word of God is the true palladium of popular liberty. The Truth's chief enemies become the unwilling witnesses of the Truth. One obvious method of proving that the Bible favours spiritual, political, and social liberty, is to show that tyranny, spiritual, political, and social, sets itself with all the steadfastness of an instinct against the Bible.

1. The Bible and *spiritual* tyranny are, in their nature, reciprocally antagonist. If we show that spiritual tyranny instinctively fears and hates the Bible, we shall have proved that the religion of the Bible favours the spiritual emancipation of mankind. The Popedom is the most finished specimen of spiritual tyranny that the world has ever seen. It is not necessary to give evidence of this. Both parties to our present argument will acknowledge it. It is known and acknowledged by all who are outside of the Pope's thraldom, that all who are within it are spiritually slaves. The right of private judgment is denounced as damnable heresy at Rome. "I believe as the Church believes," is lauded as the most perfect creed. The best

Papist is the man who has no will and no opinion but that of his priest; and the best priest is the man who has no will but that of his superior. No man within the grasp of the Papacy is allowed to think for himself. This is evident and notorious. But this most consummate spiritual despotism counts and treats the open Bible as its most dangerous foe. Popery has use for the Bible shut, perverting and employing it thus to enforce its own decrees; but the Bible open—God's word spoken to men, as shines his sun out of heaven upon the earth, it cannot endure. The advocates of Rome acknowledge that the use of the Bible is not freely allowed to the people. They confess that it is given only to such persons as the priest knows to be discreet, and as far as he permits them to use it. This is enough to show that the Bible is the acknowledged enemy of Rome. None but dangerous and dreaded books are so treated. In Italy, accordingly, and wherever Popery is supreme, the frontiers are more jealously guarded against the introduction of the Bible than against the inroads of armed men. In the circular letters of the Pope, in our own day, the Bible is denounced as the underminer of his throne.

Surely sceptics, who are zealous for human liberty, should see in this an evidence that the Bible comes from the Maker and Preserver of man.

2. As Rome serves for a specimen of spiritual, Russia may serve as a specimen of *political* despotism. Both kinds actually exist in each; but the most outstanding characteristic of Rome is the spiritual, and of Russia the political slavery. The Pope is first and essentially a spi-

ritual despot, and thereby he has reduced his subjects also into political bondage. The Czar is first and essentially a political despot, and thereby he has employed the material resources of the state to subjugate the souls of a nation. Rome has employed its despotism over the soul, to enslave also the body; Russia has employed its despotism over the body, to enslave also the soul. The religion of Russia is only a department of state administration. It is, like the religion of the old Roman empire, in the hands of the government, and used chiefly for the purpose of making the masses loyal to the empire. As in the pagan system of old, the Emperor becomes practically the object of attachment and religious reverence. But it is on the basis of a material temporal authority that all this semi-spiritual superstructure has been reared. Historically the Czar was a king before he became a god to Russia. Whereas it is the Pope's spiritual authority that procures for him money and armies: it is the Emperor's money and armies that obtain for him the superstitious homage of his ignorant subjects.

This political tyranny, with the true instinct of self-preservation, casts out and keeps out Bibles and Christians. If the Bible be not the friend of liberty, why does the Emperor of Russia seize or turn every Bible at his frontier? The northern Pope, like his Italian brother, has no objection to a closed Bible. You may give his people a Bible if it be in a language which they do not understand; but the Bible in the Russian tongue is contraband. If any one doubts whether Russia proscribes the Bible, let him try to introduce it within her borders. At the bor-

der line he will feel an argument that will fully convince him.

To both these species of tyranny, and to both these arch-tyrants, our own country and our own Queen afford a blessed contrast. In this country, mind is free: in Italy it is enslaved by a blasphemous spiritual hierarchy. If any man doubts the double fact, let him change places with some of the Italian martyrs who are wandering in exile or lying in prison for the crime of being found in their own houses with open Bibles before them. But in Italy the Bible is proscribed, while it has free course here. The inference is obvious and sure. No honest open mind can fail to take it in. Both Rome and Britain agree in the sure instinctive feeling that the Bible favours the freedom of the soul. Therefore Rome keeps it out, and Britain lets it in. Rome wards it from her shores as she would the plague: Britain spreads it as sunlight over all her borders.

In Britain there is real political liberty for all classes —imperfect, indeed, but in such measure as is nowhere else seen on a large scale, except among our own sons and brothers who have planted our liberty in another soil. In Russia the government is the most absolute autocrasy that it is possible to reduce to practice in human affairs. The Emperor of Russia is as strictly a despot as the limited capabilities of man will permit. Both Britain and Russia feel with unerring instinct that the Bible introduces, defends, consolidates political and civil liberty. Therefore Britain lets the Bible in, and Russia keeps it out. They know what they are doing. The creatures are acting after their kind.

3. The Bible is the enemy of *social* tyranny, and therefore the friend of social liberty. The most outrageous violations of human freedom in the social relations that have been known in modern times among civilized nations are the slave trade and slavery. It was Christianity that first abolished the trade, and then emancipated the slaves. There were two long battles, and two glorious victories. The first secured that no more African men should be stolen from their homes and carried into bondage by British ships: the second procured the actual freedom of all who had been already bought, or born in bondage, throughout the dominions of the Crown. No fact in recent history is more certain than this, that it was the love of Christ that gave the impulse to that holy war, and the Scriptures that directed its course. The lives of its heroes are the biographies which Christians put into the hands of the young, in the hope of winning them to a Saviour, and without reference to the question of slavery. Clarkson and Cowper, Wilberforce and Buxton, the army that overcame slavery, the chiefs and the men, were a Christian army. The force that burst its bloody bonds was the force of truth, deposited from the Scriptures into human hearts, and becoming vital in believing men. The explosive energy which prevailed to heave up and cast away the mountain-weight of self-interest opposed, was the conviction in Christians that slavery is against the word and will of God.

Those who, in the present day, keep African negroes in bondage, have done more than cross the landmark and enter the fields of the fatherless. They do not permit

their brother to possess a field—they do not permit their brother to possess himself. Those who carried them from their native land at first, robbed the poor because he was poor: those who now refuse to set them free, are oppressing the afflicted in the gate. The Redeemer of these orphans is mighty, and he will plead their cause.

But surely the slaveholders believe that the Bible is on their side, for they constantly appeal to it in their own defence. Why then do they frame laws to keep the negroes from knowing it? Why do they cast citizens into prison whose only crime is that they have taught slaves to read the Bible? When the slaveholders quote Scripture in support of their institution, the fact proves that they need its support, not that they have it. When they are really convinced that the word of God gives divine sanction to their right of property in the Africans, they will teach the Africans to read, and supply each with a Bible. The Pope and those Republicans have more in common than themselves suspect. Both are jealous of God's word, because both hold in bondage their fellow-men.

In our own country the most conspicuous example of removing ancient landmarks and robbing the poor of their heritage occurs in connection with the day of rest. "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy," is a very ancient landmark. The Father of our spirits set it up for the benefit of man, when man was first made. Some endeavour to tread it down, that they may rob the poor of their heritage, which lies safe behind it. How shall the poor man defend his patrimony, when his powerful

neighbours are bent on adding it to their overgrown domains? His only safety is to point to the ancient landmark, and appeal to his almighty Protector. If he give up the Lord's day to labour, he will plead in vain, This or that great man promised an equivalent. The day is his by an ancient charter from the King. It is his wisdom to fall back on that authentic instrument, and defy the aggressors. If the labourer hold his rest day on that authority, he will succeed; if not, he will fail. What man gives, man can take away. The rich are rulers everywhere. The poor will go to the wall, unless he lean direct on the Omnipotent.

The command is, "Enter not into the fields of the fatherless." Orphans under age are the feeblest class of the community. In all countries these have been the peculiar prey of heartless oppressors. Because they have no help in man, God takes up their cause and makes it his own. If you have the prospect of leaving an orphan child behind you at your departing, you take care to assign your property for his use, but you do not place it in his power. Poor child! the first sharper who passed would snatch it from his hands. You look for some one wise and great and good, and constitute him guardian of your infant's inheritance. You place the treasure under the guardian's authority, for behoof of your child.

So, "the Sabbath was made for man," but "the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath." It is a precious legacy from the Maker of all things to poor, short-sighted, silly children. If it were in their own hands, they would barter the boon away to swindlers. But our Father in

heaven, although he made it for our use, has not placed it in our power. Christ is constituted Lord of the Sabbath, and yet the Sabbath is a day for man. If it were in our power, it would soon be wrenched from our grasp: in his hands it is in safe keeping. If the poor know where their strength lies, they will keep their heritage. If these orphans appeal to their mighty Redeemer, the powers of the world dare not plant a foot within their fields. Let the fee-simple lie in the Trustee's hands, and come to him weekly for the usufruct. He will preserve the capital; you will enjoy the life-rent.

So far has the law of God infused its spirit into the statute-book of this favoured land, and so complete is the supremacy of law, that we cannot point to an actual case of a rich man stepping with impunity over the ancient landmark and taking away the field of the fatherless. There is much of secret deceit which human laws can never reach; but strong-handed oppression is among us impossible. While the poor have cause to rejoice in this, the powerful have no reason to repine. When a free Bible becomes the protector of right, the rights of all classes are protected equally. There is no respect of persons with God. In so far as the principles of the Scriptures affect the jurisprudence and habits of a people, the balance is held even between conflicting interests and parties. When the common people, by a process of law, successfully maintained their own rights, they did not follow up their victory by a tumultuous assault upon the rights of the proprietors. Had they done so, law and public opinion would have conspired to repress the out-

rage. When the people gain a victory in a land where the word of God is not diffused and reverenced, they follow it up, and return the blow with interest. The oppressed become the oppressors. In so far as justice in our land prevails, and victors are moderate, we are indebted for the benefit to the free circulation of the Scriptures, and the hold which their doctrines have obtained upon the public mind. In proportion as the fear of the Lord pervades a community, the legislation will be wise and the executive impartial. If we accept the greater, we shall secure also the less. If a people seek first the kingdom of God, they will get it, and a kingdom on earth besides. A people religiously right, will not long remain politically wrong. As worship rises to heaven, justice radiates on earth. If faith go foremost, charity will follow.

XXXI.

A FAITHFUL FATHER.

"My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine," &c. &c.—xxiii. 15–35.

THE style of the composition has again changed: at this place the sayings are not isolated. The discourse has become connected and continuous. It is almost dramatic. It is a life-like sketch. Each feature stands out in strong relief, and in the perspective all blend easily into a congruous whole. The picture seems to move and speak. When the curtain rises, two persons are seen in close conversation on the stage. One is verging towards age, although his look is still fresh and his step vigorous. His companion, though not yet of full stature, has turned his back on boyhood, and strives to look the man. They are a father and his son. They have stepped forth from their dwelling in the evening, to enjoy a walk together through the adjoining fields. For the moment they have no other company, and need none. The senior has laid aside a portion of the austerity that belongs to his years, and the junior a portion of the levity that belongs to his. Each has approached the other, and notwithstanding disparity of age, they have met in the midst a well-matched pair. The father stooping to sympathize with the child, encourages the child to rise into sympathy with the father. There is wisdom in this method. If the instructor had

been more forbidding, the pupil would have been more frivolous. A parent should spare no effort to make himself the companion of his boy. The victory is half won when the boy learns to like the company of his father.

To obtain a meeting,—to get the two minds really brought into kindly contact, is a great point, but it is not the whole. A platform to work upon is secured, but the work remains yet to be done. Notwithstanding the points of coincidence, these two are in many features diverse. The elder, for example, looks both behind and before; the younger, forward only. The objects lying in front of them for the time, are the wine-cup and the sumptuous feast, the loud song and the merry circle. These things seem bright in the boy's eye, and he bounds forward impatient to participate in their promised joys. The father sees the same things, but forms a different judgment regarding them. The experience of the past decisively modifies the promises of the future. Rays from *above* and from *behind* converging on these painted pleasures, reveal a rottenness in their hollow heart. He sees the inside, and the end of them. He knows that they are vanity and vexation of spirit. He looks upon his boy, and grieves to see that his eye is glistening in a tumultuous hope of indefinite enjoyment. He knows that, unless these springs prove dry, they will be poisonous; but from the youth's viewpoint, a rainbow beauty is painted on the spray that rises from their agitated waters. Fain would the affectionate father tear off the tinsel from these seducers, and reveal the cheat in time to his inexperienced child.

Meanwhile, in the pauses of the converse, some prayer

rises from that father's heart, unheard until it reaches the ears of the Lord of hosts. Perhaps it is the ancient prophet's cry adapted to his own case: "Lord, I pray thee, open the young man's eyes, that he may see." 2 Kings vi. 17. In some sense a mediator, striving to lay his hand upon both, he plies with pains his own son according to the flesh, and with prayers his own Father in the Spirit. Here is a companionship—here an occupation on which angels may well desire to look. May the Lord hear this man when he cries in faith, and the youth hear him when he speaks in faithfulness.

The foremost word of the colloquy is gladsome encouragement: "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." A parent's brow should not always wear a frown when it is turned toward his child. There should be at least as much drawing as of driving in the discipline of the family. Reproof, however faithful, and punishment, however just, make up at the best only one side of a two-fold operation. The spirit of a child will bend and break under the dead-weight of monotonous, unrelieved objurgation. We should be as ready and forward to rejoice with him in his well-doing, as to be displeased with his faults. There is reason to fear that deficiency at this point is common and mischievous. It comes easier to nature to launch forth successive rebukes, to chase each successive error of a boisterous child, than to watch, and discriminate, and cherish, and praise, whatever is good. If a parent sit in his easy chair enjoying his own reverie, taking no notice of the finer features of character that burst out thickly in the pro-

gress of the play, and never make his presence felt except by an angry bark when some naughty noise disturbs his dream, his children may grow up to something good, but they will owe very little of their moulding to him. It is probable that the only effects of his interference will be to make the young heartily dislike the reprover, and cling more closely to the faults.

It is worthy of remark, that in the two verses immediately preceding this tender, affectionate, encouraging address, the necessity and duty of corporal correction are reiterated in terms of even more than the usual pungency: "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." The command is framed upon the supposition that parents often fail on the side of tenderness. The word is given to nerve them for a difficult duty. There is no ambiguity in the precept. Both the need of correction and the tremendous issues that depend on it are expressed with thrilling precision of language. A parent is solemnly taken bound, as he loves his child and would deliver his soul, to enforce his lessons by the rod, when gentler measures fail. But the next moment, as if he were in haste to get into a more congenial element, that stern father stands with a smile lighting up his countenance, and a stream of winning words flowing from his lips, engaging the youth to goodness by foretastes of its glad rewards: "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." Iron is not penetrated unless it is supported beneath as strongly as it is struck from

above. On some such principle it is that blows only bruise, and leave the character more unshapely than ever, unless there be an effort of positive cheering to sustain, fully equal in power and continuity to the pressure of reproof that bears against evil from the other side.

But the youth, although he dutifully yields to the better judgment of his father, secretly thinks that in doing so he is depriving himself of many pleasures which others, not under similar restraint, freely enjoy. Parental experience anticipates the difficulty, and meets it: "Let not thine heart envy sinners." Their happiness is hollow; their prosperity short-lived. "Surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off." It is as much as to say that their expectation shall not ripen into possession. The blossom is luxuriant, but the fruit is already blighted. The young look on life as little children look on a fine picture; the objects that lie in the fore-ground, a bush or a cottage, fill the eye with their bulk, and the chief beauties of the landscape are neglected. Even the wisest of men never completely acquire the art of apportioning rightly their regard between the really small but apparently great things that fill up the fore-ground of time, and the apparently small but really great things that stretch away into the eternal. This lesson, in its higher stages, the parent is still learning day by day, while he teaches its rudiments to his inexperienced child.

But hard work lies before us here, and we must go into the heart of it. The rude battle of life is raging, and we must strike home. The lessons selected are those

which the pupil needs; not those which may be pleasant to the master, or interesting to the audience. Life is real. The preparation for it must be regulated by its actual requirements. To educate a young man for his life voyage is stern work. To go about and cull the beautiful flowers is not enough. We must grasp the thorns and thistles with a resolute hand. The things that are amongst us must even be named amongst us, although the sound grate harshly on a disciple's ear. Let us follow this father over the course of lessons which he gives his child.

1. "Be not among wine-bibbers." Mark well where the teacher begins. He sees the first narrow point of the rail that leads life into a line of error, and runs forward to turn it aside, so that it may not intercept and destroy the precious freight that is approaching. This father sees a danger long before his son become a drunkard—before even he become a companion of drunkards. To be in the company of those who circulate and sip strong drink, he counts unsafe for the youth. That company and that employment this father dreads —this lesson teaches to shun. Our lessons to the young on this subject would be more successful, if, like this text, they should begin at the beginning. Keep out of harm's way: go far from the entrance of the abyss;—this is the style of Scripture on that momentous theme.

On the principle of supplying the right, as well as forbidding the wrong kind of enjoyment, he gives a glimpse of a happy family circle, by way of contrast

with the club of revellers: "The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: thy father and thy mother shall be glad." The enemy pleases the tastes of youth: those who are on the other side must countermine in that direction. A dirty or sombre home cannot compete with a brilliant club-house or tavern. A frowning father and a scolding mother cannot compete with a merry circle of boon companions. It is not enough to meet the smiles of vice with the frowns of virtue. We must meet enticement with enticement. Material comforts at home and glad looks from its inmates cannot, indeed, be in the place of God to renew an evil heart; but they will do more than any other human agency to save the youth, and, in the worst event, keep your own hands clean.

2. "Buy the truth, and sell it not." This teacher is skilful in the word of righteousness. He divides the truth aright. He knows that a soul cannot live on negatives. While with one hand he strives to purge the poison out, with the other he administers the bread of life. Although these twin devils, drunkenness and whoredom, with which he is grappling, were cast out of the youth's heart, if that heart remain empty, both will soon return with others worse, and take up their abode again in the empty house. After each stroke dealt to drive out the evil, there is an alternating effort to fill the vacancy with saving truth. Although you were able to chase out every foul spirit in succession by the pungency of your reproof, your labour is lost unless you introduce that peace of God which will keep the heart and mind against the subsequent assaults of the returning and

re-enforced foe. It is not the devil out of you, but Christ in you, that is the hope of glory (Col. i. 27). Buy the truth, whatever it may cost; sell it not, whatever may be offered. Accept the portion which has been bought by the Redeemer's blood, and is offered free to you. "I am the Truth," said Jesus. Close with him, and trust in his salvation. When your heart is so occupied, these lusts will knock for admission in vain. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith."

3. "A strange woman is a narrow pit." That father's heart is burning within him as he talks with the youth by the way. He has told him of the wisdom from above, the way of mercy in the covenant; but he will not stop there. He returns to another gate of the city Mansoul, where the legions of the enemy are congregating for the assault. Having within the palace crowned the rightful King, he girds himself again for battle, and betakes himself to a threatened post. Well done, good and faithful servant! The work of presenting to a sinner the manifested salvation of God, thou hast done; and the work of loudly, plainly, particularly warning the professing disciple, to avoid every appearance of evil, thou hast not left undone.

One remarkable peculiarity of this chapter is the junction and alternation of these two kindred sins. There they stand, like two plants of death, each growing on its own independent root, and nourished by the same soil, but cleaving close to each other by congeniality of nature, and twisted round each other for mutual support. This word takes a sun-picture of these brethren in iniquity,

as they combine their strength to dishonour God and enslave men. As if one green withe, growing rank on the sap of corruption, were not enough to hold the captive, the two, by an evil instinct, plait themselves into one. Woe to the youth who has permitted this double bond to warp itself round his body! A Samson's strength cannot wrench it away. The alliance, so generally formed and so firmly maintained, between drunkenness and licentiousness, is a master-stroke of Satan's policy. It is when men have looked upon the deceitful cup, and received into their blood the poison of its sting, that their eyes behold strange women; and when they have fallen into that "narrow pit," they run back to hide their shame, at least from themselves, in the maddening draught. Here is one father who is willing to take upon his lips some names which his heart loathes, rather than by silence permit his son to go forward unwarned, unarmed, into the ambush which the enemy has laid. Let sons who hear this alarm stand and start back, and keep far from the way of transgressors. These deep ditches yawn on every side for living prey. The youth who has inflamed his passion and dimmed his reason by stimulants, is most liable to stagger on the slippery brink, and fall. Turn from the dangerous place and the dangerous company; turn, and live.

4. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." This teacher does more than merely counsel the youth not to drink to excess. This father

distinctly advises his son to turn his eyes away from the face of that cup, which has a charm in its visage and a sting in its tail. For my part, I shall endeavour to follow his example. I shall do what I can to persuade my son not to look at all upon any cup, whose nature it is to sting those who take much, and to tempt to much those who taste a little. I shall keep close by the very words of Scripture. I shall say to him, My son, "look not thou upon it." "It has cast down many strong men;" and "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

5. "Thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth on the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." This remarkable description would prove, although it stood alone, that ancient brewers contrived to manufacture liquors of power sufficient to produce and sustain full-grown drunkenness, and that ancient drunkards contrived to make themselves thorough sots upon such drinks as they had. If the malady in its more advanced stages had not existed, this description would not have been written, and could not have been understood. There may have been, and there certainly were, differences between ancient and modern times, as there are now between vine-growing and grain-growing countries, both as to the power of the draughts used and the proportion of inebriates to the population; but specimens of intoxicating drink and intoxicated men were not wanting in Solomon's kingdom

in Solomon's day. Gross drunkenness is not a new thing under the sun, although its material resources have been greatly increased and its sphere greatly enlarged in these latter ages of the world.

"The love of the Spirit" appears in this faithful description of the oinomaniac. One would think that to unveil this loathsome madness in presence of the sane, would keep them for ever far from every avenue that might possibly lead to its precincts. But alas! experience shows that a description of sin's doom is not sufficient to deter the corrupt from sin. To know the consequences, bodily and spiritual, of any vicious indulgence, will not by itself save, but it is a primary necessity among the means of saving. Therefore in mercy and faithfulness it is given here.

It is as a lion that the devil goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and as a lion he devours his victims. It is a characteristic of the feline tribe to let go their prey when they are sure of it, and amuse themselves by clutching it again. Thus the drunkard becomes a plaything in the lion's paw. He is sober. He repents of his excesses. He intends to be temperate now. No man shall ever see him drunk again. Has he escaped? Has the wounded mouse escaped when the cat has opened her claws, and permitted it to creep forward? He is wearied with his own way. He was sick. He was like one that lay on the top of a mast. He loathes the enemy that overcame him, and himself for ignobly succumbing. But notwithstanding all this, when he awakes he will seek it yet again. Some false friend will put the cup to his mouth,

and when the fire has again touched the membranes, all is in a blaze. I have seen many of my fellow-creatures in the grasp of that mysterious malady which is so graphically pictured on this page of the Scripture. Their despairing cries and haggard looks haunt my memory. The meaning that looked from the faces of their relatives when the grave had at last closed on the victim haunts me too. Dread of their destroyer has been burnt into my soul by the sights that I have seen. I adopt and repeat the two-fold counsel of this wise and affectionate father: Feed on saving truth, and flee from the approaches of danger—flee from the approaches of danger, and feed on saving truth. I receive from the Bible and give to the young these two heavenly counsels: "Buy the truth;" "Look not on the cup." Get the treasure for your soul, and keep out of the robber's way.

XXXII.

THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED.

"Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked: for there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out."—xxiv. 1, 19, 20.

SIN is like sound, and it finds the moral nature of fallen man, like the atmosphere, a good conducting medium. The word or deed of evil does not terminate where it is produced. It radiates all round; and besides the direct propagation from a centre by diverging lines, it further reduplicates itself by rebounding like an echo from every object on which it falls. Human beings may well stand in awe when they consider the self-propagating power of sin, and the facilities which their own corruption affords it. Different persons are affected in different ways. One is shaken by the example of wickedness in its first outgo; another by its rebounding blow. One is carried away in the stream; another hurts himself by his violent efforts to resist it. Some imitate the sin; others fret against the sinner. Both classes do evil and suffer injury. Whether you be impatiently "envious against evil men," or weakly "desire to be with them," you have sustained damage by the contact.

Here, it is not the first and direct, but the secondary and circuitous effect of bad example, that is prominently brought into view. The reproof in this word is intended

not so much for the facile who glide with the current, as for the proud who betray a sullen and discontented spirit in their struggle to oppose it.

To turn aside in company with the wicked is not the only direction in which danger lies. Those who resist the example of evil most vigorously may fall into a deep pit on the other side. Some who are in no danger of falling in love with their neighbour's sin, may be chafed by it into a hatred of their neighbour. You do not weakly imitate the deed, but do you proudly despise the doer? This is the snare which lies on a disciple's path. This is the warning which the Master gives them. The example of Jesus is peculiarly applicable here. It exhibits complete separation from sin in conjunction with the tenderest compassion for sinners. Those who hope in his mercy should be conformed to his image. When you detect in your own heart an impatient fretting against an evil-doer, consider where you would have been if the Holy One had so regarded you. The gentleness of Christ is the comeliest ornament that a Christian can wear.

But besides an impatient fretting against another because he is wicked, there is a discontented envying of his condition because, though morally evil, he is materially prosperous. This is the more presumptuous form of the sin. The other was a fretting against man; this is a fretting against God. It is directly to impugn the justice of the divine government. The seventy-third psalm contains a detailed record of Asaph's experience when he was in conflict with this temptation. He frankly

confesses how far he fell: "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." He saw great wickedness and great prosperity meeting in the same persons. Forthwith the presumptuous thought sprung up that nothing is to be gained by goodness: "I have cleansed my heart in vain." Knowing that this thought must be an error, he was, notwithstanding, unable to solve the difficulty until he went into the sanctuary of God. Then and there the mystery was solved: "Then understood I their end." The solution was obtained by getting a higher stand-point and a more extended view. The prosperity was but for a moment, and the sin of the prosperous was preparing for them tribulation without measure and without end. Successful ungodliness did not trouble this tempted disciple after he got in the house of God a glimpse of its awful issue. From that time forward he counted "affliction with the people of God" a better portion than "the pleasures of sin for a season."

At the present day those who desire "to live godly in Christ Jesus" are often exposed to this fiery trial. A neighbour who neither fears God nor regards man has been successful in business. You are struggling ineffectually against difficulties in trade, endeavouring in the meantime to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. You have kept a good conscience and lost your money; he has kept his money and let a good conscience go. You are trudging along the road care-worn and wearied; he is whirled past in his carriage.

Beware, brother, as your eye follows the brilliant equipage quickly diminishing in the distance before you,—beware of the feelings that glow at that moment in your weary heart. Envy of that rich man is rank rebellion against an overruling God. Your position is too low and too near. The range of vision is limited, and the little that may be seen is dim with dust. To elevate the observer gives him at once a wider compass and a purer medium. From a height he both sees more and sees it better than from the level ground. When Asaph met the prosperous scoffers down in the crowded market-place, he saw only their condition for the time; but when he ascended the hill of God, and entered there the sanctuary, his eye from that elevation could run along their glittering life and descry its gloomy end. The same experience, described in figurative language, happened to John in Patmos: "After this I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter" (Rev. iv. 1). In order to drive envy of the prosperous out of a disciple's heart, nothing more is needed than a window open in heaven, and an invitation from the angel, "Come up hither." A longer look and a clearer sky will enable you more intelligently to compare your own condition with his. When in the spirit of adoption, and from the place of a son, you look along the career of those who fear not God, you will learn to acknowledge that your lines have fallen in a more pleasant place, and that you have obtained a more goodly heritage.

Some heirs of the kingdom now in the body thank God fervently for causing the riches of their parents to take wings and fly away. They see some who have inherited wealth caught and carried away by the temptations which it brings. They tremble to think where and what themselves would now have been, had the world courted them at a time when they would have been most easily won by its fascinations. The world's cold shoulder in their youth was not pleasant to nature at the time, but they now know that it was the safer side. Instead of envying, they pity the people who are getting riches and forgetting God. By experience they have learned that their own hearts are not trust-worthy; they think it likely that if they had been equally prosperous they would have been equally godless. They rejoice with trembling; they tremble with rejoicing, as they think how wisely their lot has been appointed by a Father in heaven, and how unwisely it would have been chosen if their own wishes had been granted.

If a Christian, whether rich or poor, envy any man's possessions, he is forgetting his place and his prospects. The heirs of a kingdom are inexcusable if they cast a longing eye upon a few acres of earth which a neighbour calls his own. A "lively hope" would effectually still these tumults in a believer's breast. They who walk by faith are not easily disturbed by the things which appeal to sight. The rest that remaineth, when kept full in view, makes the passing toils feel light. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

XXXIII.

A BROTHER'S KEEPER.

"If thou fŏrbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"—xxiv. 11, 12

THE principle that God, our common Father, counts every man his brother's keeper, pervades the Scriptures as an animating spirit, and is here, in vivid language, expressly affirmed and defined. From the beginning it was so. Nowhere can this truth be more distinctly seen than as it glances reflected from the black, hard heart of the first murderer. Cain's sullen denial, when rightly read, is equivalent to a disciple's positive confession; for that carnal mind was in violent enmity against God. In the lie that flashes back from that guilty conscience you may read the heavenly truth that touched and tormented it. As from the beginning, so it is also at the end: he who closed the record of Revelation in Patmos, in character by that time as well as doctrine a contrast to the murderer of Abel, embodies the principle in the last words of inspiration, and disappears in the very act of stretching out his hands to save a brother who is ready to perish: "Let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17). Prophets before, apostles after, and Jesus in the midst, all conspired to teach, by their lips and by their lives, that a man liveth not to

himself, and dieth not to himself. Ye who bear the Saviour's name, and trust in his love, ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price. Ye have talents to lay out, and a work to accomplish—a Master to serve and a brother to save. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Whoso hath this world's good, or the next world's good, or both, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

I know not any point in the whole circumference of duty on which the human mind makes a more obstinate stand than here, against the authority of God. The determination to be his own master, and do what he liked with himself, seems to have been the very essence of the sin which constituted man's fall, and still animates the fallen. "Who is lord over us?" is the watch-word of the life-long battle between an evil conscience and a righteous Judge. Here the commandment is exceeding broad. Like divine omniscience, it compasses the transgressor before and behind. It checks his advance, and cuts off his retreat. Although a man should actually maintain, in relation to every brother, the neutrality which he professes, it would avail him nothing. Under God as supreme ruler, and by his law, we owe every human being love; and if we fail to render it, we are cast into prison with other less reputable debtors. Nor will anything be received in payment but the genuine coin of the kingdom. It must be love with a living soul in it and a substantial body on it. If it be a material gift thrown to a needy brother, wanting

the fellow-feeling of a sympathizing heart, it is a body without a soul—a carcass loathsome to the living; if it be a sentimental emotion resembling pity, unaccompanied by any corresponding deed, it is a soul without a body—an intangible spirit. A pure emotion must animate the act: the act must be animated by a pure emotion. The great Teacher has so constructed the parable of the talents that on this point none can miss its meaning. No actual injurer of his neighbour is introduced into the picture at all. The heaviest sentence which the Bible contains, or the lips of Jesus uttered, is left lying on the "unprofitable servant"—the man who failed to do good with the means at his disposal (Matt. xxv. 30). But Christ's example prints this lesson in still larger letters than his preaching. By looking unto Jesus we may learn it better than by listening even to his own word. Where would we have been now, if he had satisfied himself with abstaining from inflicting injury on a fallen world? He did not let us alone in our extremity: as we desire to be like him we should not desert our brother in his need. Jesus bids us do good, and shows us the way. Listen to his teaching, and follow his steps.

The law which runs through the Scriptures on this point is laid down in these verses in copious, clear, and memorable terms. The distress of a neighbour, the indifference of a selfish man, the excuses which the guilty presents to his own questioning conscience, and the terrors which the Lord holds over his head, are marshalled all in order here, and made to pass before our eyes like a portion of actual life.

First of all, what ails our brother, that he needs the compassion of a tender heart and the help of a strong arm? He is "drawn unto death," and "ready to be slain." This is the very crisis which at once needs help and admits it. If the danger were more distant, he might not be sensible of his need; if it were nearer, he might be beyond the hope of recovery. He is so low that help is necessary; yet not so low as would render help vain. He is "drawn unto death," and therefore is an object of pity; but his life is yet in him, and therefore he is a subject of hope. Such, in general terms, is the work which lies to our hands in the world.

The death into which a neighbour is gliding may be the death of the body, or the death of the soul, or both together. The example of Christ and the precepts of Scripture concur in teaching us to acknowledge either danger, and render either aid. A deaf ear, a blind eye, a palsied arm, a breaking heart, Jesus instantly owned as claims on his compassion; but he was grieved when men went away with the healed body, feeling not the death and seeking not the life of the soul. We should go and do likewise. Count disease and poverty a valid claim for help, but count not the cure complete when these wants have been relieved.

Disciples now are certainly like their Lord in this department of his experience: they find the sense of temporal want and the urgency for temporal relief much more common and more keen, than grief for guilt or desire for pardon. We direct attention to the disease which draws the soul to death; that which draws the body down

directs attention to itself. The man is not yet in the death that is final and hopeless. He is sliding gradually into it; something is drawing him down, and that something is within him. If that ailment be not cast out, perdition is sure. The sting of death is sin, and already that sting is planted deep in the soul. It has not yet reached its issue, but it is running its inevitable course. When a poisonous serpent plunges its sting into the flesh and blood of a man, the man lives yet a while. The body does not instantly become cold. The poison mingles with the blood, and so permeates the frame. The fever rises, tumultuously but steadfastly, like the tide. The serpent's sting has taken hold of the life, and is drawing it surely to death. Like this uneasy interval is human life, until it is made new in Christ. The sting of the Old Serpent has gotten hold, and will not let go until it be taken out by a Stronger One. "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." If a gang of captured Africans, chained to each other, were in our sight driven from the interior to the shore for sale, there would not be a dry eye amongst us as the sad procession passed. These chains, and that death to which they draw the victims, are things seen and temporal. Captives more numerous, and more firmly bound, are drawn along our thoroughfares to a greater death! If we had spiritual perception to estimate the distress, our compassion would not be shut up within our own bosoms for lack of subjects to exercise it on.

Such are the objects and such their claim: how do those meet it who have themselves gotten help from God?

The form of the warning indicates the point at which the defect is anticipated: "If thou forbear to deliver." The Author of this word knows what is in man. The point of the sword goes to the joints and marrow. It does not assume that men, when they see a brother drawn unto death, will in mere wantonness give him a blow to hasten his fall. Such a deed of gratuitous wickedness may here and there be found; but it is an abnormal excrescence, and not the ordinary fruit which even fallen humanity bears. If the reproof had been aimed at that enormity, it would have missed the most of us. The arrow, pointed higher, comes more surely home. The charge is not that we strike a standing brother down, but that we fail to raise a fallen brother up. The law under which we live is the law of love; and whenever any doubt arises as to practical details, the Pattern is at hand to mould it on and test it by: "Love one another as I have loved you." A Christian doing good should be like an artist working from a model, looking alternately from the rude material in his hands up to the perfect example which he imitates, and down from that example to the rude material again.

The excuse, "We knew it not," will not avail us in as far as we might have known. "Seek, and ye shall find," applies to opportunities of saving them that are ready to perish, as well as to benefits which we may obtain for ourselves. Ignorance will not be reckoned for innocence, if He who pondereth the heart saw it selfishly keeping the disagreeable knowledge away. He that keepeth thy soul will ask one day what thou hast done for the keep-

ing of others, and He will then render unto every man according to his works.

The conclusion of the whole matter may be expressed in these words of the apostle: "Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. vi. 9, 10). The two limits are, on this side "opportunity," and on that side "all men." Between these two lies the ample exercise-ground for a Christian, on which he is expected, like his Master, to go about doing good. Do more for the household of nature or of faith than you do for those who are distant from you or from God,—it is not sinful to respect these relations and permit them to influence the proportion of your efforts; but the heart's compassion should acknowledge no limit to its flow short of the world's boundary, and the helping hand no limit to its stretch except the opportunity and the power.

The destinies of men are so closely interwoven together, that every one of us has a direct interest in delivering those who are now drawn unto sin and death. If we forbear to help him who is falling now, he and his may drag down with themselves our children when we are no longer here to prevent the calamity. That poor wretch who is drawn, like the Gadarene swine, by possessing spirits down a steep place into the abyss, has a number of young children littering in the hovel which they call their home. These children are growing up a brood much more dangerous than savages. In them the forces of

civilization are under the control of barbarism. They are an ingredient which, in proportion to its bulk, darkens and pollutes the society into which it is poured. My children must be poured into the same great tide of time, and I cannot keep them from indiscriminate contact with its varied impurities. Thus, by my love to my own children, God binds me to do my best for my neighbours; and the rod which is lifted up for punishment will strike me on the tenderest place, if I neglect this salvation work.

A few miles above Montreal, the two great convergent rivers of British America, the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa, meet. The St. Lawrence is a pure stream, of a peculiar, light-blue colour: the Ottawa is dark, as if it were tinged by moss in its way. After their meeting the two rivers run side by side a few miles, each occupying its own half of one broad bed; but gradually the boundary line disappears, and all the waters are mingled in one vast homogeneous flood. Although the life of the inhabitants below depended on preserving the pure cerulean hue of the St. Lawrence, it could not possibly be preserved. All the might of man cannot prevent the Ottawa from tinging the united waters with its own dark shade. Unless the darkness can be discharged from its springs, that great affluent will effectually dye the main river in all its lower reaches. Behold the picture of the process by which the neglected children of our unsaved brother, meeting our own at a lower point in time's rolling current, will blot out the distinction which is now maintained. Behold the rod lifted up in our sight to

prevent the neglect now, or punish it hereafter! The dark cellars in which ignorant, vicious, godless parents, now pen their hapless brood, are the springs which feed a mighty river. Our little ones rise in cleaner spots, and in the meantime a solid bank separates the streams. But that turbid river lies within the same basin, and by the laws of nature must converge towards the central channel of society. It is an affluent. We must accept the fact, for we cannot change it. We dread that dark stream which, at a little distance, is flowing parallel with our own. Over the embankments, now not very lofty, we hear sometimes the ominous gurgle of its rapid flow. There is only one way of subduing that terrible enemy. If we cower timidly in our own hiding-place, the destruction which we thereby invite will quickly overtake us. In this warfare there is no armour for the back of the fugitive. Safety lies in facing the danger. The evil which in its issue is a deluge, may in its origin be successfully neutralized. Below you cannot keep the gathered volume out: above you may do much to purify the rising spring.

XXXIV.

PIETY AND PATRIOTISM.

"My son, fear thou the Lord and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change."—xxiv. 21.

"THERE are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland," said James Melville to his royal master; and our forefathers sturdily maintained the maxim through a long series of troubles, until the tyrants fell and liberty triumphed. The supreme authority of God, and the subordinate authority of human government may both have fullest scope in the same country, and at the same time. Godliness and loyalty, like brethren dwelling together in unity, may possess the same heart, and the heart is all the nobler that these twin inhabitants have made it their home. Those who cherish both principles together fulfil best the specific duties which belong to each. The Covenanters and Puritans were not faultless men. By aid of the light which we now enjoy, some of their measures may be corrected and improved: but it is too late to make them better now, and it is a pity that our philosophers who see their faults so clearly when they are in their graves, had not been present in the conflict to give them counsel. In the main, those men were right, and God has blessed their labours. They were the honour of their country, and have proved the benefactors of their race. Those who laugh most loudly at their faults, have in secret no

sympathy with their virtues. Looking outward at the present experience of other nations, and upward through the history of our own, patriots, rejoicing in achieved liberty, may well tremble yet as they try to picture what our condition might have been at this day, if God had not raised up rank after rank of religious and loyal men—a break-water to receive the waves of combined spiritual and temporal despotism, and ward them from our shores.

The fear of the Lord and the fear of the king are in themselves great and interesting subjects, but at present I ask the reader only to glance at their order and relations. I speak not of godliness and loyalty separately and in all their extent, but only of their mutual bearing upon each other. Submission of heart and life to the King Eternal overrides and controls, yet does not injure, a citizen's allegiance to an earthly ruler. This principle lies deep, and spreads far. It reaches all lands, and runs down through all generations. The word is, "Fear the Lord and the king." The fear of the Lord must go first, but the fear of the king may follow. The supreme does not crush, it protects the subordinate. Although the heart is full of piety, there is plenty of room for patriotism. Nay more, patriotism nowhere gets full scope except in a heart that is already pervaded by piety. These elements are like the two chief constituent gases of the atmosphere. The space which envelops the globe is full of one gas, and it is also full of another. To discharge the nitrogen would not make the space capable of containing more of the oxygen. The absence of the one constituent destroys the quality but does not enlarge the

quantity of the other. Take away godliness, and your loyalty, without being increased in amount, is seriously deteriorated in kind. Take away loyalty, and you run great risk of spoiling the purity of the remanent godliness. God's works are all good: his combinations are all beneficial. If we attempt to amend, we shall certainly mar them.

Obedience to rulers is a positive command. It is binding everywhere and always, until it is taken off by the same authority that imposed it. Men are not permitted to determine for themselves how far they shall go in obedience to magistrates. Such a principle would produce universal anarchy, and is not found in the Bible. Go forward in your allegiance to "the powers that be," not until you think you have gone far enough, but until you come upon the law of God, claiming the space in front for Himself, and absolutely forbidding your advance. Go forward with the fear of the king, unless and until the fear of the Lord cross your path like a wall.

There is room for every effort by the citizens to get laws amended and grievances redressed, but no permission given in the Scriptures to rise in rebellion with the view of achieving any temporal good. Resistance is not prescribed as a remedy when the magistrate invades your rights; that terrible resource is held in reserve for one terrible contingency—when the magistrate invades the rights of God. If any one, looking from the political view-point, should say this concedes only a limited measure of liberty; it is not my business to supply an answer.

My duty is to point out what the Scriptures teach. To their authority I fondly cling; for the subject on independent grounds of philosophy is too deep for me. If I am cast abroad upon abstract speculation for the grounds and limits of a subject's obedience, I am in a sea where I can feel no bottom and see no shore. No feasible rule can be laid down, except that which the Scriptures contain. Let any man try to write down a scale showing when and wherefore private persons may lawfully resist public authority, and he will soon be convinced that the task is hopeless. Every attempt to define the liberty of rebellion, will be found to open a door to anarchy.

In point of fact very little of the liberty that now exists in the world has been achieved by violent resistance to governments because of oppression in temporal things. Wherever civil liberty is large and lasting, it has grown slowly by successive accretions, the effect of peaceful effort: or, if it has been obtained wholesale, it will probably be found that the tyrant government fell and broke itself upon a resisting people in the effort to usurp the authority which belongs to God. Violent revolutions, although provoked by injustice and oppression on the part of princes, have seldom secured and consolidated the liberty of the people.

The condition of the European continent now, and its history during the last ten years, lead us back, in the interests of patriotism as well as religion, to the very letter of the scriptural rule, "Fear the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change." It is true that the people have been unjustly oppressed

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by their rulers; but it is also true that they have gained nothing by rebellion. We can observe these two facts; but we cannot do much more. The subject is too deep for us. God in his word condemns all tyranny on the part of princes, but he does not there prescribe an armed rising of the people as the method of redressing their wrongs. He retains the retribution in his own hand, and permits it to fall in his own time on the head of the guilty. Men who intelligently fear God, and make his word their law, while they unite with every patriot in efforts to improve the condition of the people and the laws of the state, are disposed to bear wrong when their temporal rights only are invaded, and to reserve the ultimate remedy of resistance for those laws of man that would compel them to violate the law of God.

Among enlightened Christians loyalty is more than a negative principle. It is not enough for them that they refrain from resisting constituted authority. They learn from the Scriptures to be "subject not only for wrath but for conscience' sake." Fear of the king is comparatively a feeble sentiment. Alone it cannot long withstand assailing temptations. The fear of the Lord is a mightier principle. It is its nature, wherever it lives and thrives, to strike its roots down into the deepest places of a human heart. In the Scriptures the feebler force is made fast to the stronger, and so carried through in trying times. Loyalty is most secure where it has godliness to lean upon.

The Popedom has appropriated these doctrines to itself, and employed them for its own ends. The principle of

Melville is adopted at Rome. The priests teach most earnestly that allegiance to a temporal sovereign is limited, and controlled by a prior and superior spiritual claim. This truth perverted has become the main-stay of popish power. They adopt the divine revealed law, "Fear the Lord and the king," and foist an old Italian priest, the chief or the tool of a college of cardinals, into the place of the living God. The nations, with their eyes put out, grind like Samson in the mill of these lordly priests. The Romanists are accustomed to take up the arguments wherewith we defend the truth, and employ them to support their own lie. Hence, when the ancient war-cry of our forefathers, "We must obey God rather than man," began to rise in a crisis of our own day, the politicians recognised a wonted sound, and exclaimed, Here is Popery over again. Yes; the doctrine of the Covenanters and of the Papists is the same. Both maintain and teach that a supreme allegiance is due to One Supreme, and that obedience to human governments comes in under it, and only in as far as may be consistent with it. Up to this point they agree; but in one thing they differ. Those accord the supreme allegiance to God, according to the rule of the Scriptures; these accord it to the Pope, as advised by the dark and selfish counsels of the junto of cardinals that surround him. If our legislators had an eye to take in the breadth and depth of that distinction, it would be better for themselves and the nation.

The popish doctors have a pleasant coating wherewith they cover their bitter pill. They teach that it is spiritual

authority only that is claimed by the Pope, not temporal. Thus the shipmaster, with a leer in his eye and the helm in his hand, tells the remonstrant horseman on deck that he may mount his own steed and ride in any direction he pleases. When persons or peoples embark on board the Pope's ship, they may, like little children, play at temporal liberty, by chasing each other from side to side, or from stem to stern; but the wary pilot has them under his power, and will carry them and theirs into any port he chooses.

A British Christian owning God, according to his word, as supreme ruler of the conscience, and knowing no authority on earth superior to the Queen, is a safe subject and a useful citizen. A Papist, settled on our soil and enjoying the benefits of our constitution, sworn to yield primary allegiance to a foreign prince in all that relates to spiritual interests, and conceding absolutely to that prince the right to define what spiritual interests are, may be in his own character personally a good man, but cannot in any crisis be counted a loyal subject. The difference between these two is as great as the difference between light and darkness. If it were generally perceived, and practically acknowledged, it would go far to right the labouring ship of the State, and prepare her for meeting the baffling winds and deceitful currents of the times.

We do not, however, expect light to arise on the political horizon. We must look in another direction for the dawn. Although Popery is the greatest tyrant, and the chief support of others, the love of civil liberty has not light enough to perceive the danger, nor strength

enough to strike the blow. Civil liberty is indeed in principle and practice against the Popedom, but it is like an infant in a giant's hands. The Popedom is a "spiritual wickedness in high places." Terrestrial patriotism stands on a lower platform, and cannot reach its mighty foe. Only spiritual light can cope with that spiritual darkness. It is the kingdom of God within his redeemed people that can resist and at last overthrow the kingdom whose seat is on the seven hills. Nothing but the spread of saving truth can restrain and throw back the flood of destructive error.

Political liberalism, though it desire a good thing, has not strength to win it. It wants pith and bottom. Popery is too many for it. The great victories over the world and its god are won, not by policy, but by faith. It is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

XXXV.

THE SLUGGARD'S GARDEN.

"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."—xxiv. 30–34.

THIS section of the Book of Proverbs is wound up by a touching picture of sloth and its consequences. The description is true to nature, because it is taken from fact. The words need no paraphrase; the meaning all shines through. This observer has taken a photograph of the sluggard's garden, without asking the sluggard's leave. Copies may be multiplied to an indefinite extent, showing the condition of his home, and shop, and factory. From the same original you might even sketch with considerable accuracy the desolation that broods over his soul.

In this case, however, as in many others, good came out of evil. The idle man, without knowing it, gave the passenger a lecture on the virtue of diligence: "Then I saw and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received instruction." If the learner's own heart is in a right condition, he may obtain a profitable lesson from every sight that meets his eye, and every sound that falls upon his ear. A teachable scholar will make progress under a

very indifferent master, and in a very unlikely school. If a man has a clean conscience and a well-balanced mind, he is in a great measure independent of surrounding circumstances. When a man's ways please the Lord, He will make even his enemies to be at peace with him. All things will be constrained to work together for good. If the righteous are in sight, he will follow their footsteps: if the evil cross his path, he will turn another way.

The learner and the lesson stand before us here in a picture which looks like life. A passenger is suddenly arrested by some object on the way-side. He stops short, seeks an elevated stand-point, and gazes earnestly through a gap in a broken wall. It is a field with a vineyard on its sunniest slope, the patrimonial farm of a Hebrew householder who lives in the cottage hard by. They were not the ripening clusters of a well-dressed vineyard, or the waving grain-fields of a thrifty husbandman, that drew the curious eye of the traveller in that direction. Thorns and nettles covered all the ground within, and the wall that once surrounded it was crumbling. There was no fence round the vineyard to defend the fruit, and no fruit within the vineyard to be defended. The owner did nothing for the farm, and the farm did nothing for the owner. But even this neglected spot did something for the passing wayfarer who had an observant eye and a thoughtful mind. Even the sluggard's garden brought forth fruit—but not for the sluggard's benefit. The diligent man reaped and carried off the only harvest that it bore—a warning. The owner received nothing from it; and the onlooker "received instruction."

Here is a principle which might be extended. The lesson read by one may be learned by a thousand. People complain that they have few opportunities and means of instruction. Here is one school open to all. Here is a schoolmaster who charges no fee. If we are ourselves diligent, we may gather riches even in a sluggard's garden. He who knows how to turn the folly of his neighbours into wisdom for himself cannot excuse defective attainments by alleging a scarcity of the raw material. If we were skilful in this kind of mining, we would find many rich veins in our own neighbourhood. There are many sluggards' gardens on either side of our path: if we consider them well, we shall receive instruction from each. If we obtain a little from each, a rich store of wisdom will soon accumulate in our hands.

Here is a sluggard's garden; the object is worthy of a second look, and will repay it. You observe the house into which that haggard, half-naked labourer entered; follow him, and you will find a lesson written on the inside of his unhappy home. The house is empty and unclean; the wife is toiling hard in the heart of the confusion, and scarcely looks up as her husband comes in. There is not a seat on which he can rest his wearied limbs; and as no preparation has been made, an hour must pass ere food of any kind can be prepared to satisfy his hunger. He growls in anger, or groans in despair, according as he has been more or less inured to this species of misery. If you examine him, he will tell you that he came early home so often and found the house unready for him, that the motive was at last worn away.

If you examine her, she will tell you that she prepared so often for his early return in the evening, and so often waited in vain, that the motive was at last destroyed, and she ceased to struggle. To determine precisely the origin of the evil, as between the two, seems a problem as difficult as to ascertain the sources of the Nile: but the result is abundantly plain. Their house is desolate,—their hearts are callous. The garden has been neglected, and now it is utterly waste. This garden produces no sweet fruit to its owner; but you may bear away a harvest from the stinging nettles that grow rank on its graveyard corruption. Let a young man watch and pray that he enter not into temptation in his choice at first. Let a young woman, when a proposal is made to her, seek the consent of "our Father in heaven" ere she gives her own. Let the two, when united, bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Let a husband cherish and manifest a tender affection, strive to make his wife's burdens light, and be pleased with her efforts to please. Let the wife have a clean house, and a comfortable meal, and a blithe look, all ready for her husband when he returns from his toil. The inside of a loveless dwelling, the pen that shelters an ill-matched pair, teems with lessons for the inexperienced passenger. Look on it, and receive instruction.

A youth, after having lain a heavy burden on his parents throughout the period of childhood, rebels and defies them as soon as he has acquired strength sufficient to win his own way in the world. Weary of listening to their counsels, he deserts them. While they were

strong and he was weak, they stinted themselves to supply all his wants: when he became strong, and they in turn were feeble, he selfishly left them to sink or swim, and devoted all his means to the gratification of his own tastes. His parents have at last been brought with sorrow to the grave, and his pleasures have begun to pall. Now the prodigal would fain arise and go to his father; but he has no father and no home. His bursting heart would get relief if he could weep on the neck of those whom he has injured, and confess his sins; but this may not be—it is too late. He is wretched, and his wretchedness stares out of his eyes upon every observer. Consider him well, young man; there is a lesson in him. He gives instruction, as Lot's wife gave it, free to all who pass. The sluggard has wasted his own garden, and starves; but the hand of the diligent may gather riches within its broken walls, and from its barren surface.

A young woman, with a fair countenance and a light heart, has listened to flattering lips, and, confident in her own steadfastness, has ventured to walk on slippery places. She has sunk in deep mire. Hope has perished now, and therefore effort has ceased. These rags cover a shrivelled frame, and that shrivelled frame conceals a broken heart. Look upon that vineyard. Consider well the rent wall that lays it open to prowling wild beasts; and the rank growth of nettles, the chosen cover of noisome night-birds. Look, young woman, on that once blooming garden, now a fetid swamp,—look on it, and receive instruction.

All things are new in the world without to those who

are renewed in the heart within. If the eye is single, the whole body will be full of light. When the learner is a child of God, even the works of the devil will supply him with a lesson. When the record is complete of all the "schools and schoolmasters" that have in various departments contributed to educate "the whole family of God," it will be a wonderful miscellany. Its running title will be, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's."

XXXVI.

MONARCHS, UNDER GOD AND OVER MEN.

"These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable. Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness."—xxv. 1–5.

Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs (1 Kings iv. 32). Whether they were all written we do not know, but they have not been all preserved. Some of them, though useful in their day, were not suitable or necessary in subsequent ages; others were selected by holy men of old whom the Spirit moved, and stored in the Scriptures as a treasury of practical instruction and reproof for all nations and all times. Inspiration obviously applies to the selection of what should be recorded, as well as to the utterance of that which is in itself true and divine. We need not be surprised to learn that many of Solomon's sayings, after serving "their own generation, fell on sleep," and were lost to the world; for a greater than he spoke many words of heavenly wisdom to His immediate disciples which were not recorded, and which we on earth will never know. The apostles drank in for their own life all that fell from the great Teacher's lips, but recorded only those portions which his Spirit directed them to preserve as the heritage of the Church.

"The men of Hezekiah" were not ordinary men. That godly King of Judah was surrounded by a band of kindred spirits, who co-operated with him in a great revival. It was a bright time at Jerusalem when Hezekiah reigned and Isaiah prophesied. It is evident that the king encouraged the prophets and the prophets supported the king. The Seventy read, "The friends of Hezekiah." Solomon's words were counted precious in those days; and the associated patriots gathered up the fragments, that nothing which was permanently useful might be intrusted to tradition. This collection was made by inspired prophets, and admitted into the canon of the Jewish Scriptures from the first. It was recognised by the Lord and his apostles as part and parcel of the Scriptures which were given by God to teach the way of eternal life.

This portion opens with a contrast as to dignity and wisdom between the King Immortal and an earthly ruler: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter." God is the uncaused cause of all things. He is the centre and source of being. He knows the end from the beginning. In his knowledge there is no progress, because there is no imperfection. "His understanding is infinite." It is by slow degrees and by laborious effort that we work our way into the minute portions of creation that lie within our reach. It is the privilege and glory of man to search into the infinite above and beneath him; but he is not able to go far in either direction. Mines which we count deep have been driven by human hands into the earth's crust, and yet how short is the line that sounds them in comparison

with the earth's radius! But this conveys no adequate idea of the difference between the depths of God's works and the line which limits men's researches. Between the shaft of a deep mine and the depth of the globe, from its surface to its centre, there is a definite and known proportion; but between what we know of God's work and that work in all its extent, there is no proportion which we can calculate at all.

"Thou art a God that hidest thyself," is one of the attributes of the Supreme. In nature he has, so to speak, two hiding-places,—one above man, and another beneath him. Some things are hidden from our view by being too great, and some by being too small for us. Men search as far as they can in the one direction with the telescope, and in the other with the microscope, but beyond every depth attained lies a deeper still. How great the contrast between divine and human government! The one proceeds from within outwards, with perfect knowledge of the whole; the other feels its way laboriously upon the surface, and cannot fully comprehend even the small matters that lie within its jurisdiction.

These men of Hezekiah "feared the Lord and the king" in due order and proportion. They were godly and loyal. In arranging their collection of Solomon's proverbs, they set in the fore-ground the supreme and unapproachable wisdom of God, and thereafter magnify the office of the prince: "The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable." Though an earthly sovereign is feeble and short-sighted in contrast with the Supreme, yet, in comparison with

other men, kings enjoy great honour and exercise great influence. There is a certain sublimity in the royal dignity. In every condition men expressly or tacitly own it. Even those who in theory are adverse to regal government cannot be entirely stoical in a monarch's presence. There is grandeur in sovereign power, without respect to the justness of its title or the beneficence of its sway. We have seen all Europe watching the countenance of one man, and eagerly scanning every sign or syllable which might indicate the purpose of his heart. But the still, reverential regard of millions, does not imply a belief on their part that the man who is its object is endowed with superhuman wisdom. It is enough that in point of fact his single will can quench or kindle war over the area of two continents. This element of power possessed elevates monarchy, and sets it on the summit of earthly things. The constituents which compose Mont Blanc are not more heavenly than the earth of lesser hills, and yet the human spirit stands in awe before that regal mountain. In some such way are men affected by the presence of a king, although they know well that the person occupying the office for the time is nothing more than an average specimen of humanity. The Lord reigneth, and they who fear him should rejoice. He will set restraining bounds to the wrath of man. Although mankind have suffered much from the cruelty of despots, yet the race have derived an incalculable benefit from the tendency to venerate monarchy, which manifests itself so strongly, especially in a primitive state of society. Government, as compared with anarchy, is so great a bless-

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Here is a principle which might be extended. The lesson read by one may be learned by a thousand. People complain that they have few opportunities and means of instruction. Here is one school open to all. Here is a schoolmaster who charges no fee. If we are ourselves diligent, we may gather riches even in a sluggard's garden. He who knows how to turn the folly of his neighbours into wisdom for himself cannot excuse defective attainments by alleging a scarcity of the raw material. If we were skilful in this kind of mining, we would find many rich veins in our own neighbourhood. There are many sluggards' gardens on either side of our path: if we consider them well, we shall receive instruction from each. If we obtain a little from each, a rich store of wisdom will soon accumulate in our hands.

Here is a sluggard's garden; the object is worthy of a second look, and will repay it. You observe the house into which that haggard, half-naked labourer entered; follow him, and you will find a lesson written on the inside of his unhappy home. The house is empty and unclean; the wife is toiling hard in the heart of the confusion, and scarcely looks up as her husband comes in. There is not a seat on which he can rest his wearied limbs; and as no preparation has been made, an hour must pass ere food of any kind can be prepared to satisfy his hunger. He growls in anger, or groans in despair, according as he has been more or less inured to this species of misery. If you examine him, he will tell you that he came early home so often and found the house unready for him, that the motive was at last worn away.

If you examine her, she will tell you that she prepared so often for his early return in the evening, and so often waited in vain, that the motive was at last destroyed, and she ceased to struggle. To determine precisely the origin of the evil, as between the two, seems a problem as difficult as to ascertain the sources of the Nile: but the result is abundantly plain. Their house is desolate,—their hearts are callous. The garden has been neglected, and now it is utterly waste. This garden produces no sweet fruit to its owner; but you may bear away a harvest from the stinging nettles that grow rank on its grave-yard corruption. Let a young man watch and pray that he enter not into temptation in his choice at first. Let a young woman, when a proposal is made to her, seek the consent of "our Father in heaven" ere she gives her own. Let the two, when united, bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Let a husband cherish and manifest a tender affection, strive to make his wife's burdens light, and be pleased with her efforts to please. Let the wife have a clean house, and a comfortable meal, and a blithe look, all ready for her husband when he returns from his toil. The inside of a loveless dwelling, the pen that shelters an ill-matched pair, teems with lessons for the inexperienced passenger. Look on it, and receive instruction.

A youth, after having lain a heavy burden on his parents throughout the period of childhood, rebels and defies them as soon as he has acquired strength sufficient to win his own way in the world. Weary of listening to their counsels, he deserts them. While they were

strong and he was weak, they stinted themselves to supply all his wants: when he became strong, and they in turn were feeble, he selfishly left them to sink or swim, and devoted all his means to the gratification of his own tastes. His parents have at last been brought with sorrow to the grave, and his pleasures have begun to pall. Now the prodigal would fain arise and go to his father; but he has no father and no home. His bursting heart would get relief if he could weep on the neck of those whom he has injured, and confess his sins; but this may not be—it is too late. He is wretched, and his wretchedness stares out of his eyes upon every observer. Consider him well, young man; there is a lesson in him. He gives instruction, as Lot's wife gave it, free to all who pass. The sluggard has wasted his own garden, and starves; but the hand of the diligent may gather riches within its broken walls, and from its barren surface.

A young woman, with a fair countenance and a light heart, has listened to flattering lips, and, confident in her own steadfastness, has ventured to walk on slippery places. She has sunk in deep mire. Hope has perished now, and therefore effort has ceased. These rags cover a shrivelled frame, and that shrivelled frame conceals a broken heart. Look upon that vineyard. Consider well the rent wall that lays it open to prowling wild beasts; and the rank growth of nettles, the chosen cover of noisome nightbirds. Look, young woman, on that once blooming garden, now a fetid swamp,—look on it, and receive instruction.

All things are new in the world without to those who

are renewed in the heart within. If the eye is single, the whole body will be full of light. When the learner is a child of God, even the works of the devil will supply him with a lesson. When the record is complete of all the "schools and schoolmasters" that have in various departments contributed to educate "the whole family of God," it will be a wonderful miscellany. Its running title will be, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's."

XXXVI.

MONARCHS, UNDER GOD AND OVER MEN.

"These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable. Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness."—xxv. 1–5.

SOLOMON spoke three thousand proverbs (1 Kings iv. 32). Whether they were all written we do not know, but they have not been all preserved. Some of them, though useful in their day, were not suitable or necessary in subsequent ages; others were selected by holy men of old whom the Spirit moved, and stored in the Scriptures as a treasury of practical instruction and reproof for all nations and all times. Inspiration obviously applies to the selection of what should be recorded, as well as to the utterance of that which is in itself true and divine. We need not be surprised to learn that many of Solomon's sayings, after serving "their own generation, fell on sleep," and were lost to the world; for a greater than he spoke many words of heavenly wisdom to His immediate disciples which were not recorded, and which we on earth will never know. The apostles drank in for their own life all that fell from the great Teacher's lips, but recorded only those portions which his Spirit directed them to preserve as the heritage of the Church.

"The men of Hezekiah" were not ordinary men. That godly King of Judah was surrounded by a band of kindred spirits, who co-operated with him in a great revival. It was a bright time at Jerusalem when Hezekiah reigned and Isaiah prophesied. It is evident that the king encouraged the prophets and the prophets supported the king. The Seventy read, "The friends of Hezekiah." Solomon's words were counted precious in those days; and the associated patriots gathered up the fragments, that nothing which was permanently useful might be intrusted to tradition. This collection was made by inspired prophets, and admitted into the canon of the Jewish Scriptures from the first. It was recognised by the Lord and his apostles as part and parcel of the Scriptures which were given by God to teach the way of eternal life.

This portion opens with a contrast as to dignity and wisdom between the King Immortal and an earthly ruler: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter." God is the uncaused cause of all things. He is the centre and source of being. He knows the end from the beginning. In his knowledge there is no progress, because there is no imperfection. "His understanding is infinite." It is by slow degrees and by laborious effort that we work our way into the minute portions of creation that lie within our reach. It is the privilege and glory of man to search into the infinite above and beneath him; but he is not able to go far in either direction. Mines which we count deep have been driven by human hands into the earth's crust, and yet how short is the line that sounds them in comparison

with the earth's radius! But this conveys no adequate idea of the difference between the depths of God's works and the line which limits men's researches. Between the shaft of a deep mine and the depth of the globe, from its surface to its centre, there is a definite and known proportion; but between what we know of God's work and that work in all its extent, there is no proportion which we can calculate at all.

"Thou art a God that hidest thyself," is one of the attributes of the Supreme. In nature he has, so to speak, two hiding-places,—one above man, and another beneath him. Some things are hidden from our view by being too great, and some by being too small for us. Men search as far as they can in the one direction with the telescope, and in the other with the microscope, but beyond every depth attained lies a deeper still. How great the contrast between divine and human government! The one proceeds from within outwards, with perfect knowledge of the whole; the other feels its way laboriously upon the surface, and cannot fully comprehend even the small matters that lie within its jurisdiction.

These men of Hezekiah "feared the Lord and the king" in due order and proportion. They were godly and loyal. In arranging their collection of Solomon's proverbs, they set in the fore-ground the supreme and unapproachable wisdom of God, and thereafter magnify the office of the prince: "The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable." Though an earthly sovereign is feeble and short-sighted in contrast with the Supreme, yet, in comparison with

other men, kings enjoy great honour and exercise great influence. There is a certain sublimity in the royal dignity. In every condition men expressly or tacitly own it. Even those who in theory are adverse to regal government cannot be entirely stoical in a monarch's presence. There is grandeur in sovereign power, without respect to the justness of its title or the beneficence of its sway. We have seen all Europe watching the countenance of one man, and eagerly scanning every sign or syllable which might indicate the purpose of his heart. But the still, reverential regard of millions, does not imply a belief on their part that the man who is its object is endowed with superhuman wisdom. It is enough that in point of fact his single will can quench or kindle war over the area of two continents. This element of power possessed elevates monarchy, and sets it on the summit of earthly things. The constituents which compose Mont Blanc are not more heavenly than the earth of lesser hills, and yet the human spirit stands in awe before that regal mountain. In some such way are men affected by the presence of a king, although they know well that the person occupying the office for the time is nothing more than an average specimen of humanity. The Lord reigneth, and they who fear him should rejoice. He will set restraining bounds to the wrath of man. Although mankind have suffered much from the cruelty of despots, yet the race have derived an incalculable benefit from the tendency to venerate monarchy, which manifests itself so strongly, especially in a primitive state of society. Government, as compared with anarchy, is so great a bless-

ing, that even after many heavy oppressions are deducted, a surplus of solid gain remains to human kind.

But seeing that a king by office wields a power so great, the law of God and the interests of men require that it shall be wisely directed towards beneficent ends. Kings have, in all times and all places, been more or less swayed by the counsellors who surround them. In our country, more than in other monarchies, the people, in their collective capacity, have a potential voice in the selection of the persons who shall stand next the throne and influence the government. The precept is therefore directly applicable to us. We are commanded to take away the dross from the silver, that the forthcoming vessel may be pure. In as far as it is placed in our power, it is also laid upon our conscience to "remove the wicked from before the king," that his "throne may be established in righteousness." Here lies the duty, and here the danger of Britain. We need not expect that the supreme Ruler will support our sway in the world if we elevate the wicked to the high places of authority, and sustain them there. His law is, "Them that honour me, I will honour." If, by the united will of a God-fearing nation, God-fearing counsellors are planted round the throne, we may hope for the continuance and extension of our authority in the world. How shall we dare to pray that God would preserve to us the empire, in order that we may squeeze riches for ourselves from the sinews of subject millions? If our rule is such as to bless the nations, we may plead with the Lord to prolong our sway. We need not expect that God will give the world

to us, if we do not count and make it our mission to bring the world to God. Wherever the Master imparts the ten talents, he accompanies the gift with the injunction, Lay them out for me. No counsel will prosper that rejects or ignores that highest law. If we permit the dross of ungodly selfishness to tinge the councils and control the government of the state, the goodly vessel will go to pieces in our hands.

In India, the noblest foreign possession of our own or any other crown, the policy of the government, sustained by the community, has been to maintain intact the variegated superstitions of the East, lest any religious commotion should interrupt the stream of gain in its homeward flow. The authorities have with smooth tongue flattered, and with strong hand defended, the hideous and cruel worship of devils, which in the name of religion possesses and torments the land. They have supported and propagated doctrines which they knew to be dishonouring to God and injurious to men, that the multitude so flattered might be more easily governed. They have exerted their influence against the introduction of Christianity among the natives, lest conversion should breed commotions and diminish our gains. Now God has withdrawn his protecting hand, and permitted an insurrection to burst forth to which the world's history cannot afford a parallel. Our policy has failed. We fawned on these hideous idols as if we had had no almighty Protector in heaven; and now these idols tear us limb from limb. We adopted the policy, and are suffering the chastisement of Ahaz, the weak and wicked King of Judah: "For he sacrificed unto the gods

of Damascus, which smote him; and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel" (2 Chron. xxviii. 23).

In the whole matter of Indian government, a counsel vicious to the core has predominated. We must "take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the refiner." We must no longer suppress revealed truth, and uphold the doctrine of devils. We must fear God in the heathen's sight, and have no other fear.

XXXVII.

A FAITHFUL MESSENGER.

"As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters. Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint."—xxv. 13, 19.

THE art of cooling drinks in a hot climate by snow and ice preserved or imported seems to have been known and practised at an early period of the world's history. In our cool insular clime we cannot fully appreciate the worth of such a refreshment, because we never very keenly experience the want of it. Imagination must largely aid the senses ere we can rightly estimate how the eyes of a Hebrew husbandman sparkled at the sight of "snow from Lebanon" when a harvest sun was beating on his brow. Such a refreshment in time of difficulty is a faithful messenger who goes forth through the danger, and comes back with relief.

In a crisis, at an early stage of the Crimean war, the bearing of a message became the hinge on which success or disaster turned, and the messenger who bore it became the hero of the day. When the Russian army had been routed on the Alma, and the allied commanders had determined to march past Sebastopol and seize the port of Balaclava as a base of operation, a message to the fleet, charging it to meet the army in the morning there, was a vital element of the plan. The British officer who bore

it proved a faithful messenger. When the army, after their inland night march, first crowned the heights that overlook the shore, the foremost ships of the fleet were steaming cautiously up the narrow inlet. When the commander of the army, with the responsibility of the manœuvre lying heavy on his heart, looked over those girdling hills and saw the admiral's flag waving in the harbour, the faithful messenger whom he had despatched across the enemy's country the evening before, must have been felt like snow in harvest refreshing his soul.

The American missionary Judson was imprisoned in Burmah and doomed to death. Alone in the hands of heathen savages, that Christian apostle could do nothing to preserve his own life. He learned in his prison that a British ship of war was in the Burmese waters. Both power and will to save were at hand, but all might have miscarried if no messenger had been found, or if the messenger sent had not been found faithful. God had given the missionary favour in the eyes of some who had access to the prison. Having intrusted the vital message to one of these, he intrusted himself to his Father in heaven, and awaited the result in patience. Next day the boom of a cannon from the sea fell on the ear of the missionary, as he lay in his dark, hot dungeon. It was evidence that a knowledge of his danger had reached the British captain. His messenger had been faithful, and that faithfulness then was like snow in summer to his weary heart. When the message was delivered all the rest was easy. The ship of war soon wrenched the Christian captive from the hands of the barbaric king.

A history might be written of such decisive messages borne by such faithful messengers, and a thrilling history it would be. But the position and power of the oppressor are sometimes such, that a mere messenger, however faithful, cannot in any measure contribute to the deliverance of the captive. When the enemy's hosts girdle the beleaguered city round, to bear a message forth would be to the bearer a baptism of blood.

Such is the condition of the world, and such the baptism which the "Messenger of the covenant" came through in his saving work. He is a brother born for the adversity in which we lay. He is faithful to bear tidings of the danger, and mighty to save from death. He delights to speak of himself as one who has been sent. "He that sent me," is the epithet by which he loves to designate the Father. This Messenger came into the world to make God's mercy known; and by his faithfulness the Sender was refreshed. The testimony came in a voice from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But Jesus is a messenger in another way. He is Mediator. He lays his hand upon both. He brings God's message to us, and bears our message back to God. If we in our low estate have any request to present before the King Eternal, he is ready to be its bearer. "We have an Advocate with the Father." "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Through Him the meanest captive who pines in this distant prison and sighs to be free, may send his petition safely to the Lord God of Hosts. The Messenger is faithful, and will cer-

tainly refresh the souls of those who intrust their petitions to his hand. He bore the tidings of mercy to us, though the wrath due to a world's sin blocked up the way: how much more will he bear our request to the Father, now that his suffering is over and his everlasting joy begun! He carried God's message to us, when our ungrateful ears were shut against the sound: how much more will he carry our cry to God, who loves to hear of the prodigal's purpose to return! All ye that are weary and heavy laden, send in your requests by the hand of this faithful Messenger. For the purpose of presenting them with power Christ ascended. "It is expedient for you that I go away." He delights when we give him work. He is happy when his hands are full. He put his disciples on the way of pleading, like a master guiding his pupil's hand in writing the petition out. "Hitherto," he said, "ye have asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive." This Messenger will be like snow in harvest to those who in their extremity send a message unto God by him. He will refresh the souls of those who send him.

Our help is laid on One that is mighty. He is Messenger and Conqueror too. There is none other who is able and willing to save. He stands now at the door of a closed heart, ready to bear a message from the perishing to the throne of grace, and pleading for such a message to bear. Present always by his word and Spirit, he cries, and cries again, weeping, to the careless, "Here am I, send me." He promises to pray to the Father for us: and we know that his prayer prevails. Already as Pro-

phet he has come, making known the way of salvation: now he enters as Priest within the veil, bearing his people's requests for grace: in the end he will come again as King, and bear his people themselves into glory.

In contrast with the refreshment which a faithful messenger pours into a weary spirit, "confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint" (ver. 19). It is worse than want. To expect support, and be, in consequence, pierced by a broken reed, is a greater calamity than the sternest refusal could inflict. The greatest disaster, in proportion to the number of men engaged, that has befallen our arms in the Eastern insurrection, was the direct result of confidence in an unfaithful man. At Arrah on the Ganges three or four hundred soldiers were sent to attack a body of the rebels, and relieve some British residents who were in danger there. A native was employed to ascertain the position of the enemy. In consequence of his report the men left the river and made a night march into the interior. The messenger was false. The little army fell into an ambush prepared for them in the jungle. Two-thirds of their number were shot down in the dark by unseen foes. The remnant escaped to their ships when the day dawned. As they lay in that fatal valley getting their death-wounds in the dark, and helplessly wishing for the day, how exquisitely bitter must have been the reflection that a too ready trust in a faithless man had wrought them all this woe!

When life is at stake there should be no softness or slackness in scrutinizing the character of a messenger.

Especially in matters which directly affect the life of a soul, the credentials of unknown mediators should be rigorously tested. What shall become of those who send their petitions for mercy from God through the saints of the Romish calendar? The messenger is unfaithful, and the message will never reach its destination. These old bones and pictures cannot carry your request to the throne, or obtain its answer there. The disembodied spirits whom these relics are said to represent are not more effectual mediators than the relics themselves. They have neither omniscience to hear your prayer on earth, nor merit to make it prevalent in heaven. Ah, who can conceive the distress of the deceived when they discover, too late, that they have put confidence in deceivers, and neglected the one Mediator between God and man!

Christ is the faithful Messenger, and "now is the accepted time." There is a gulf which even Jesus will not cross to make a path for the prodigal's return. Although the separation which sin has made between us and God is inconceivably great, a living way stretches over it by which petitions go now for grace—by which the petitioners shall follow to glory. But the Messenger of the covenant will never traverse the chasm which the final judgment will leave between the good and the evil. Weary pilgrims! as you would have refreshment for your souls in your day of need, send your petition by a faithful messenger in an accepted time. "Come unto God by Him," for there is no other advocate with the Father: and come now, lest the door be shut.

XXXVIII.

THE FIRE THAT MELTS AN ENEMY.

"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee."—xxv. 21, 22.

THE germ of this most precious moral lesson was deposited in the earth at an early period of its history. In the laws of Moses it takes a form suited to the simplicity of primeval times: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again" (Ex. xxiii. 4). Jesus in his day found it in the Pharisees' hands, covered over with an encrustation of Rabbinical traditions, which not only obscured, but utterly perverted its meaning. As corrupted by the Jews the precept ran, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." When the Lawgiver incarnate had stripped the encumbering glosses from his own command, the vital germ, released from the imprisonment of ages, budded and burst and blossomed in the Light: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. v. 44, 45). This is the ripened fruit which the simple Mosaic precept produces for our use in the new dispensation; for Christ came not to

destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil. In the lips of Jesus the lesson attained its fullest dimensions and divinest form. Paul, delighting in all things to follow his Master's footsteps, took up the ancient law, as Solomon had expressed it, and wove it for ornament and strength into his greatest treatise at its practical turning point: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 19-21).

But we have not reached the origin of this wonderful law when we have traced it up to Moses. His and all subsequent expressions of it are copies merely. The original is indeed a deep thing of God. That which he commands us to do to one another He had already done to us in the everlasting covenant. He saw mankind in active enmity against Himself. He visited his enemies not to condemn, but to save. He gave food to the hungry, and water to the thirsty. He gave all good in Christ. He gave that unspeakable gift to enemies. He gave it, as coals of fire, to melt the hardened. This is the pattern after which all true morality is fashioned. The soul of social duty is, "Love one another as I have loved you!"

To love an enemy is a principle that comes from heaven. It is not indigenous on earth. Even after it has been planted in a human heart its growth is generally stunted, for want of a soft soil and a genial atmos-

phere. It is a tender exotic, and its fruit seldom comes to perfection in the cold damp field of the world. Some who seem to excel in other graces, fall far short here. This is peculiarly the "grace of the Lord Jesus." One who knew it well represented it as the distinguishing feature of his work, that "while we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. v. 10). Those disciples, accordingly, who walk most closely with their Master will be found to excel the most in this rare attainment. It is only when the same mind is in us that was also in Christ Jesus, that we shall love our enemies and do them good. When he was lifted up on the cross he gave out the key-note of the Christian life: "Father, forgive them." The gospel must come in such power as to turn the inner world upside down ere any real progress can be made in this difficult department of social duty. When we learn like Paul to "long after" our neighbours "in the bowels of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 8), we shall like him long after them all without exception. It is in proportion as a disciple loses the sense of his separate identity, and realizes his union as a member in the body of Christ, that his charity is able to cover the high provocations of those who deliberately do him wrong. As water, though it be actually low within the distributing channel, will rise again to the height of its source, so when the compassion that flows through a believer in the body is the very compassion that flows into him from Christ, it is a good of sufficient power to overcome the most formidable manifestations of evil. Practice directly depends on faith.

When duty is difficult, faith must be strong. Accordingly it was when the Master enjoined his disciples to forgive an enemy seven times a-day, that they cried out, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke xvii. 4, 5). They felt the force of mercy in their own hearts utterly inadequate to the difficult work which was prescribed, and with the true instincts of the new creature, sought a remedy suited to their want—a sealed union of the empty channels with the upper spring of abounding grace.

This method of treating an enemy is prescribed, not merely because it is abstractly right in principle, but also as the best practical means of obtaining a specific beneficial result. Do him good in return for evil, "for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." The idea of a furnace is introduced here with reference to the smelting of mineral ore, and not to the torture of living creatures. The coals of fire suggest not the pain of punishment to the guilty, but the benefit of getting his hard heart softened, and the dross removed from his character. Love poured out in return for hatred will be what the burning coals are to the ore: it will melt and purify.

In the smelting of metals, whether on a large or a small scale, it is necessary that the burning coals should be above the ore as well as beneath it. The melting fuel and the rude stones to be melted are mingled together, and brought into contact particle by particle throughout the mass. It is thus that the resistance of the stubborn material is overcome, and the precious separated from the vile. The analogy gives an impressive view both of the injurer's hardness and the power of the forgiver's love.



Christians meet much obdurate evil in the world. It is not their part either peevishly to fret or proudly to plan revenge. The Lord has in this matter distinctly traced a path for his disciples, and hedged it in. It is their business to render good for evil; it is their business to pile forgiveness over injuries, layer upon layer, as diligently and patiently as these swarthy labourers heave loads of coals over the iron ore within the furnace: and that not merely in conformity with an abstract idea of transcendental virtue, but with an object as directly and as substantially utilitarian as that which the miner pursues. The Christian's aim, like the miner's, is to melt, and so make valuable, the substance which, in its present state, is hard in itself and hurtful to those whom it touches.

The Americans have a tract on this subject, entitled *The Man who Killed his Neighbours*. It contains, in the form of a narrative, many useful practical suggestions on the art of overcoming evil with good. It is with kindness,—modest, thoughtful, generous, persevering, unwearied kindness,—that the benevolent countryman kills his churlish neighbour; and it is only the old evil man that he kills, leaving the new man to lead a very different life in the same village after the dross has been purged away. If any one desires to try this work, he must bring to it at least these two qualifications, modesty and patience. If he proceed ostentatiously, with an air of superiority and a consciousness of his own virtue, he will never make one step of progress. The subject will day by day grow harder in his hands. But even though the successive acts of kindness should be genuine, the operator must lay his

account with a tedious process and many disappointments. Many instances of good rendered for evil may seem to have been thrown away, and no symptom of penitence appear in the countenance or conduct of the evil-doer; but be not weary in this well-doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not. Although your enemy has resisted your deeds of kindness even unto seventy times seven, it does not follow that all, or that any one of these has been lost. At the last, the enmity will suddenly give way, and flow down in penitence under some single act, perhaps not greater than any of those which preceded it; but every one that preceded it contributed cumulatively to the glad result. The miner does not think that his coals of fire are wasted, although he has been throwing them on for several successive hours, and the stones show no symptom of dissolving: he knows that each portion of the burning fuel is contributing to the result, and that the flow will be sudden and complete at last. Let him go and do likewise who aspires to win a brother by the subduing power of self-sacrificing love.

The practical effect of kindness in subduing the evil-doer, as well as its originating principle, is exhibited in the covenant of grace before it can appear in the life of believers. In this department as in others, Christians are not inventors,—they must be "imitators of God as dear children." If any one succeed in melting a neighbour's hard heart by undeserved love, he has borrowed the method whereby Jesus won his own. Led to repentance himself, when he was seared in sin, by the undeserved goodness of God, it is the instinct of the renewed to

repeat the process on a smaller scale wherever he can find a subject, as it is the instinct of little children to imitate in a diminutive sphere the actions of their father. The saved know the effect which goodness from God in return for evil has produced on their own hearts, and therefore are ever, according to their measure, trying the same process on their fellow-men.

Nor does this unmeasured mercifulness impede the action of righteousness either in God or in man. Mercy to sinners, as it appears in the gospel, is totally diverse from indulgence to sin. God knows how to be both just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. The perfect adjustment of righteousness and mercy in the Pattern should be sufficient to keep the imitator right. It is possible to forgive freely a brother's sin, and yet thereby give him no encouragement to repeat it. No man can supply a directory which shall tell the learner, in every case that occurs, wherein and how far he should, in the interests of justice, maintain his rights against an evil-doer; and wherein and how far he should, in the interests of mercy, forgive. No such external rules exist; no such external teaching is possible. It is not lo here and lo there; the kingdom of God and its laws are within the hearts of its loyal subjects. When you love both righteousness and your erring brother as Christ loved both righteousness and you, the difficulties will vanish like mist as you go forward to meet them. If you get upon the traces of the Lord's goings, the way will be easy and the issue sure. If you are willing to follow him, he will lead you through. Your forgiveness

of wrong, when you see your way to bestow it freely, will not embolden the transgressor to think lightly of the law; your stand for righteousness, when you see meet to make it, will not detract from mercy's melting power upon the transgressor's heart. Be mercifully righteous, and righteously merciful, like the Lord; and as he has thereby won you, you will thereby win your brother.

The workman in this department is worthy of his hire, and he will get it. The Master who prescribes the task has promised the labourer his wages: "The Lord shall reward thee." Those who fulfil this "royal law" will receive from the King a royal recompense. The wages are not "corruptible things, as silver and gold." The winner's reward is the brother whom he has won. The Lord himself expressly announced, as the profit accruing from a cognate labour, "Thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt. xviii. 15). No work is so well paid as this; and no efficient workman goes away discontented. Those who would not value this kind of reward are precisely the persons who never try this kind of work. To render good for evil without limit as to time and quantity, is a hard effort; and to turn a neighbour's hatred into love is all that can be made by it. He who does not value the pearl will not dive for it; but he who dives for it shows by the very act that he values the pearl. The same love that risks the outlay will count the return abundant. This is the way of the Lord. In the doing of his commandments is a great reward. Those who do his work cannot be deprived of their wages; for the work is wages and the wages is work.

XXXIX.

A TIME TO FROWN AND A TIME TO SMILE.

"The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue."—xxv. 23.

THERE is a use for everything. There is a use for the north wind, and for an angry countenance. Rough visaged, ungainly messengers both are; but when sent on necessary errands, they fulfil their mission well. When David wanted a weapon, Ahimelech, the peaceful priest of Nob, having no other than the sword of Goliath, which he kept as a relic, apologized as he offered it, thinking it not sufficiently slim and fashionable for a soldier from the court. "There is none like that," said David; "give it me." The man of war had seen hard service, and expected more. The sword that could deal a heavy blow was the sword for him.

According to the translation in the text, which is perhaps on the whole as free from difficulties as that in the margin, it appears that in the climate of Palestine the north wind carries the rain clouds away, and prevents them from discharging their burden on the land. The same phenomenon is to some extent observed in our own island. This meteoric fact is framed into a proverb, and employed to describe an analogous feature in the action of moral forces upon human life: "An angry countenance driveth away a backbiting tongue."

There is a place for anger as well as for love. As in nature a gloomy tempest serves some beneficial purposes for which calm sunshine has no faculty; so in morals a frown on an honest man's brow is, in its own place, as needful and useful as the sweetest smile that kindness ever kindles on a human countenance. A gentle, loving character, is much admired, and, where it is genuine, deserves all the admiration it has ever gotten yet. These features, however, constitute only one side of a man, and we must see the other side ere we can pronounce an intelligent judgment on his worth. If he has not another side, he will not leave his mark on the world. If he has not the faculty of frowning, I would not give much for his smile. A worthy matron once showed me her own portrait set in a massive frame, and suspended in the most conspicuous place of her best room. Her sons had secured the services of an eminent artist to fix their mother's features on the canvass that filial piety, in a future day, might have the double aid of sense and memory in the effort to recall the past. The old lady, after asking her visitor's opinion, frankly pronounced her own: "It is not in the least like me; I never had such great black blotches in the middle of my face." The artist's shade offended her. A shining disc of red and white would have pleased her better. She excelled more in the management of family economics than in judging a work of art. Such, in a more important sphere, is the taste that demands only gentleness in human character, and would dispense with virtues of swarthier shade.

We don't want a fretful, passionate man; and if we

did, we would find one without searching long or going far. We want neither a man of wrath, nor a man of indiscriminating, unvarying softness. We want something with two sides; that is, a solid, real character. Let us have a man who loves good and hates evil, and who, in place and time convenient, can make either emotion manifest in his countenance. The frown of anger is the shade that lies under love and brings out its beauty. The wisdom that is from above, whether as doctrinally revealed in the Bible or practically operating in a Christian's life, "is first pure and then peaceable." Salt is worthless when it has lost its saltness. The double command of the Lord, corresponding to the two constituent elements of a disciple's character, is, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another" (Mark ix. 50.) The gentleness which will have peace on any terms, is neither pleasing to the Lord nor beneficial to men. If there is no pungency there will be no purifying.

An angry countenance is a specific for taking the venom out of a backbiting tongue. The disease is painful and dangerous; the medicine which cures it is worth its weight in gold. An angry countenance is not in itself and for its own sake a blessing to its possessor. Like some valuable medicines, it is a fiery and dangerous thing. It is not safe to harbour it in large quantities, or carry it about in company. There is imminent risk of explosion. But it is well to have a supply of the tincture always within reach, and wherever a backbiting tongue shows itself, resolutely to administer the dose.

A backbiting tongue would be comparatively harmless

if it should never meet with itching ears. Alone, it would be like seed without a soil. The mischief would soon die out if it wanted the power to propagate its kind. To speak evil is, in this department, the first and great sin; but the second, which is like unto it, is to hear evil. Knit your brows at the backbiter's approach, and he will soon sneak away. If you do not take the venom in, he will not long continue to give it out. Frown like the north upon the parasite who flatters you by speaking evil of a neighbour. Call up the angry countenance to chase the troubler from your presence, as you would unleash the gruff watch-dog to scare the robber from your garden.

In a subsequent proverb this principle is specifically applied to an actual case: "If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked" (xxix. 12). Whether he be the ruler of a family, a shop, a manufactory, or a nation, it behoves him to lay to heart this plainly spoken and homely warning. The practice which this word exposes is very common and very mischievous. It is not enough that you abstain from telling lies to the prejudice of others: to listen to such lies is only one degree less guilty. There is an appetite in human nature for secrets clandestinely obtained. Stolen waters are sweet. This tendency should be jealously watched and sternly repressed. It is a man's interest, as much as his duty, to starve this morbid curiosity out of his own heart. Like other abnormal appetites, if it is indulged it will increase. If you give it much, it will demand more. Nor will the supply of aliment fall short. He who listens to lies will always

have plenty of lies to listen to. This habit in a ruler is disastrous directly to his dependants, and indirectly to himself. Those of the servants who tell lies to their master become sycophants; those of them against whom lies are told grow desperate. Confidence is destroyed, and fear has not power to hold the incongruous elements together. The servants are wicked, and the loss falls ultimately on the master.

From this side the responsible head of any large establishment is always exposed to danger. Backbiters are moving about like flies in the sunshine. Timidly at first, and tentatively, and one by one, they alight upon him. If they find him soft, they gather courage and sit down in swarms upon his body. Firmness is a fundamental requisite for the master who has many servants. Without it, even genuine kindness will be practically thrown away. A man who has not a frown in reserve cannot turn his smiles to any good account. It is refreshing to see the vermin flying before an angry countenance. When once scared away, this kind do not so readily return. Those masters who give tale-bearers their desert at first, are seldom troubled with them a second time. One master's weakness, although not so sinful in itself, may thus be as mischievous in its effects as another master's wickedness. Many grain-fields have rotted after they were ripe, for want of a sharp north wind to drive the clouds away; and many social blessings have been blighted in the bud, for want of a frown at the proper time upon the ruler's face.

Such anger, far from being antagonist to love, is the

very instrument which love wields. If you have not a frown on your face wherewith to meet the backbiter, you cannot have true kindness in your heart towards the innocent whom he undermines. No man can serve these two masters. To obey the one is to despise the other. You cannot both maintain the cause of the innocent, and open your ear to the traducer's tale. Love of the true is, on its other side, a north wind that will drive a cloud of lies away. You may as well attempt to admit light into a chamber without expelling the darkness, as to retain affection for the good without becoming a terror to the evil.

Nor do the real interests of the injurer himself require a different treatment. Love even to the backbiter demands that you should have an angry countenance ever ready to meet a backbiting tongue. You are cruel to him, and not kind, if by your softness you stimulate still further the growth of a thorn which is already choking whatever good seed has been sown in his heart. Give the devil that possesses your brother a blow, although your brother himself should feel the smart: when he comes to himself he will thank you.

XL.

COLD WATERS TO THE THIRSTY SOUL.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."—xxv. 25.

WATER is a wonderful work of God. The consumption of it is great, but the supply is abundant. It is stored in the ocean, and distributed by clouds. For the preservation of its purity, it is laid up in salt: but each portion that is carried away for actual use is distilled in the process of removal, that it may be fresh and sweet when it is poured upon the ground. It is carried in clouds across the continents, and poured out on central mountain ridges, that the whole land may be refreshed by it as it returns to the sea. Both the chemical composition of the water, and the mechanical apparatus employed in its distribution, teem with wonders. Some hydraulic machines of vast power have been made by human hands, but the greatest of them sinks into insignificance before the self-acting engine which irrigates a world with fresh water from a salt sea, and brings back the used material as good as ever to the store again, without the loss of as much as a dew-drop in a thousand years.

The common rule in human affairs is, that things of great intrinsic value are possessed in diminutive quantities; whereas coarser stuffs are more abundant. The reverse is the law in the Creator's storehouses. They contain

the largest stock of the best articles. Men ungratefully hide from their own minds the unspeakable worth of water, under the vast profusion of the supply. There is seldom a lively appreciation of the benefit until it be burnt into the memory by the pain of privation. If you would have cold water valued at its true worth, offer it to a thirsty soul. In our own country happily we must depend on the testimony of others for the full meaning of the figure. It is not in our moist climate that instances of severe suffering from thirst occur. We are familiar with the phenomenon as a matter of history, but not as a matter of experience. Certain touching episodes in the Scriptures have made us acquainted with the facts from our earliest years. The story of Hagar and her boy is one of those that go into the memory, as a legend goes into the rock from the pen of iron that writes it there. And what reader of the New Testament will ever forget the picture of the wondrous Man, sitting weary on the well of Sychar, asking common water of the woman to refresh his own parched lips, and giving her in return the living water which springs up into everlasting life!

Like that best of all bodily refreshments is the relief which good news from a far country bring to a spirit that has been chafed by many successive alarms, and worn out by long-continued apprehension of evil. During the present season British mothers not a few have had sons and daughters in the interior of India, shut up within frail walls with a scanty supply of food, while thousands of cruel heathens swarmed around thirsting

like wild beasts for their blood. The bi-monthly message has reported, in its usual laconic terms, that the Europeans had taken refuge in the fort—that the treacherous enemy, lay in force before it—and that help was still far distant. After these few pregnant words have been uttered, there is silence until the succeeding mail arrives. Fourteen times the sun goes down in the west and rises in the east again, and all that time these British mothers can see no sign from that distant land where their treasures lie. Imagination peoples the time and space with varied terrors. The massacres already perpetrated by the same faithless foe supply too readily a body in which fear's fevered dream may clothe itself. Bloody swords and ghastly corpses flit all night before sleepless eyes. These two weeks expand into years, and the expanded space is full of agony. The strain of the suspense is drying up the marrow in the heart of the bones. We have thirsty souls here, and lo, from the Eastern heaven cold water comes. The good news, travelling literally with the lightning's speed, fall in large cool drops on these burning hearts: A British army has swept across that sultry plain, driven away the hordes of cruel Asiatics, and borne the famished garrison away alive to a place of safety.

Another example of the principle presents itself by association before us here, and presses for a notice too. Better news, from a more distant country, have come to cheer a deeper gloom. "Good news" is the specific name by which God's mercy to men is known. The "peace on earth" which was proclaimed by angels and procured by Christ—which is offered in the word and enjoyed by the

faithful, is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. An intelligent being, not of our race and nature, would expect that when the message came the whole world would be on tiptoe to receive it. But in point of fact very many silently neglect, and not a few openly despise it. Those who pant for it, as the hart for water-brooks, seem to be in all ages a minority in the world. The message of mercy is to most men like cold water to a soul that is not thirsty. Where there is a burning thirst perhaps there is no material blessing that affords to a human being such a lively pleasure as cold water: but, on the other hand, scarcely anything can be more insipid in the absence of thirst. When it is applied to the lips of a satisfied man, it is not indeed actively or violently offensive, but it is utterly tasteless, and is therefore set aside and forgotten.

Such precisely is the treatment which the "glad tidings" get at the hands of men. To "neglect the great salvation" is at once the sin of the greatest number, and the greatest sin. There is relish enough in the world for all sorts of news except the best.

"Whene'er we meet you always say,
What's the news? what's the news?
Pray, what's the order of the day?
What's the news? what's the news?

Oh! I have got good news to tell,—
My Saviour hath done all things well,
And triumphed over Death and Hell:
That's the news, that's the news."

The writer of these lines was a lunatic; but a wisdom which is hidden from the wise and prudent was revealed

to that babe. A thick film had gathered round his brain, which excluded or distorted all the lower lights; but his soul was open upward, and the "Light of Life" came in.

But there are many thirsting souls on earth, and many refreshing drops falling from heaven. "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" and they who are his know the Lord. Thirst is a blessed thing, if cold water be at hand; cold water is a blessed thing to those who thirst. Needy sinners get: a gracious Saviour gives. When thirst drinks in cold water, when cold water quenches thirst, the giver and the receiver rejoice together. While the redeemed obtain a great refreshment in the act, the Redeemer obtains a greater; for Himself was wont to say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

XLI.

AN IMPURE APPETITE SEEKS IMPURE FOOD.

"As a dog returneth to his vomit; so a fool returneth to his folly."—xxvi. 11.

THE natural tastes may be keen and tender, while the moral sense is blunt. Refinement may be dissociated from holiness. Some who live in spiritual impurity would shriek at the sight of material filth.

According to the usual method of the Scriptures, a known thing is employed here to teach an unknown. The taste which inheres in nature is used as an instrument to implant the corresponding spiritual sensibility. The revulsion of the senses from a loathsome object is used as a lever power to press into the soul a dislike of sin. The image suddenly thrown across our path in this text is reflected from one of the most disgusting sights that meet the passenger's eye on the promiscuous paths of life. The suggestion, acting through memory on a vivid imagination, makes the flesh creep. But this is no oversight. He who knows what is in man seeks a tender place, and of set purpose touches him there. This word wounds the quick flesh in order to awaken sensibility in the dead spirit. Through the lively perceptions of nature an arrow of conviction is aimed at a callous heart.

Although the original is inexpressibly revolting, the image is boldly and broadly sketched. No graceful

drapery shrouds the unseemliest features of the object. The figure is exhibited in its length and breadth. The plainness is all needed. The lines are strongly drawn that the lesson may be clear and cutting. There must be a rude, hearty blow, for there is a hard searing to be penetrated. Those who go back to suck at sins which they once repudiated, may see in this terse proverb the picture of their pollution; only the Omniscient perfectly knows and loathes the vile original.

The apostle Peter, finding this reproof in the Bible, judged it a suitable instrument to be used in the coarser portions of his work. He was an earnest, outspoken man. His speech was more distinguished for strength than for polish. When called in the course of his ministry to deal with backsliders, he snatched this weapon from the old armory of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah had preserved, and used it without a word of apology for its serrated and trenchant edge. The whole passage in Peter's epistle is peculiarly interesting, as an example of the manner in which the writers of the New Testament sanction, adopt, embody, and expand, the inspired record of the older dispensation: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his

own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. ii. 20–22).

Some persons who had heard the gospel, abandoned their vicious courses, and been enrolled as members of the church, had after a while openly returned to their former sins. The apostle betrays no faltering in dealing with the case. He utters a certain sound. Although it was "the knowledge of the Lord" that induced them at first to reform their lives, they had never been in true faith united to the Saviour. The fear of the Judge had driven them for a time from their indulgences, but the love of the Redeemer had not conclusively won them to hope and holiness. They dreaded Christ's judgment-seat, but were not created again into his image. They fled in fear from the material food of their corrupt appetites, but carried their corrupt appetites away alive in their breasts. When the terror passed the tastes revived, and, by a resistless instinct, devoured again the very abominations which they had cast out as evil.

Peter supplies a graphic description of the process by which old lusts regain their dominion, and he who seemed emancipated is again enslaved. The man who fled from the pollutions of the world is "entangled" therein again, and thereby overcome. The term indicates that one thing is plaited into another, as the strands of a rope, or the branches and roots of contiguous trees. Where suitable substances are so interwoven, whether by art or nature, they cannot be severed from each other without being torn in pieces and destroyed. When the affections of a corrupt heart are by frequent gratification allowed to push their roots deeply

into the pollutions of the world, and the pollutions of the world are allowed to warp themselves round the affections of a corrupt heart, a dreadful process of "plaiting" is accomplished under ground unseen; and the insnared victim at last refuses to renew the struggle, because he feels or fears that a violent separation would wrench out his life. A man's life has been partially reformed, while his conscience remains unclean. He flees from the sins which he fears, and yet loves the sins from which he has fled. Under the impulse of this unsubdued desire he steals back, when an opportunity occurs, to the neutral ground between good and evil, and dallies with the old impurities across the boundary-line. To him all seems level and safe; but he is on the brink of ruin, and his steps will "slide in due time." When thirst for the world's pollutions revives, he saunters on the edge of the world's territory, where by stretching over he can sip a little now and a little then of the abandoned sweets. Chafing under the self-imposed but unkindly restraint, he argues with himself that Christianity does not frown on harmless enjoyments. He intends to stand with his feet on the safe side, while with his hand he plucks a pleasure from the side which is not safe. The appetite and its gratification, both unchanged, grow into each other again. When the unrenewed heart and the pollutions of the world are, after a temporary separation, brought together again, the two in their unholy wedlock become "one flesh." The crash of a sudden judgment disturbs the long lethargic slumber. The Philistines be upon thee, Samson! The unconscious captive arises and shakes

himself; but his locks are shorn and his strength is gone. Any green withe may bind and hold him now. His eyes will soon be out. He will grind darkling all his days in the prison for sport to his cruel foe.

Peter summons another witness of kindred character to corroborate the testimony of the more ancient proverb. The apostolic supplement, though the same in kind, is in degree less caustic than the original germ. The appended proverb, though less pungent as a reproof, reveals a touching feature in the nature of spiritual declension. The sow was washed. The filth was wiped from the creature's skin, but the creature's instincts remained unchanged. She is as clean and white as the lamb that feeds beside her on the grass; but whenever an opening appears in the fence, she bounds towards the mire and bathes her body in it. It is not necessary to watch the lamb, and fence it round lest it should go and do likewise. It has no inclination to do so. It has another nature. Man's true need—God's sufficient cure is, "Create in me a *clean heart*, and renew a right spirit within me."

XLII.

NOW, OR TO-MORROW.

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow: for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."—xxvii. 1.

To-MORROW will come: on that point there is no doubt; but will you be here to meet it? The day is sure, but your interest in it is altogether uncertain. We have faculties for knowing the past and experiencing the present, but none for discerning the future. We know well, each in his own immediate sphere, what was yesterday, and what is to-day, but we know not at all what shall be to-morrow. The uncertain things are not the day and its nearness, but our life and our condition when it arrives.

To count on to-morrow so as to neglect the duty of to-day is in many respects the greatest practical error among men. None have a wider range, and none are charged with more dreadful consequences. Whether the work in hand pertain to small matters or great,—to the sowing of a field or the redemption of a soul,—for every one who deliberately resolves not to do it, a hundred tread the same path, and suffer the same loss at last, who only postpone the work to-day with the intention of performing it to-morrow.

This proverb contains only the negative side of the precept; but it is made hollow for the very purpose of

holding the positive promise in its bosom. The Old Testament sweeps away the wide-spread indurated error; the New Testament then deposits its saving truth upon the spot. The law declares that to-morrow is the worst time for making the decisive choice, and the gospel proposes to-day as the best. For making the choice on which the interests either of time or eternity depend Solomon warns us to distrust the future, and Paul persuades us to occupy the present hour. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "To-morrow" is the devil's great ally,—the very Goliath in whom he trusts for victory: "Now" is the stripling whom God sends forth against him. A great significance lies in that little word. It marks the point on which life's battle turns. That spot is the Hougomont of Waterloo. There the victory is lost or won. Men do not often join issue against God on the person of Christ or the ministry of the Spirit, on the ground of acceptance or the necessity of faith; on all these points and many others the carnal mind readily acquiesces in the doctrine of Scripture, like willows bending to the breeze, but resists Christ's claim to be admitted now, as a rocky shore resists the onset of the waves. The worldly will freely agree to be Christians to-morrow, if Christ will permit them to be worldly to-day.

The *Now* which divine mercy presents to men, instead of their own false *To-morrow*, represents in one view a line running through all time, and in another a point touching only the present moment. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one

day. The two representations are congruous, and each is in its own place important.

1. Let Paul's *Now* represent time, and Solomon's *To-morrow* represent eternity; in this aspect to-day, and not to-morrow, is the day of salvation for mankind.

When we compare time with eternity in relation to the hopes of men, serious misconceptions sometimes steal in under the guise of a more advanced spirituality. People search for comparisons to indicate how very small this life is, and how very great is the life to come. Imagination is put upon the stretch for the means of expressing how much eternity exceeds in importance the present time. In one point of view and for one purpose this is right; but in another point of view and for another purpose it is wrong. This life is in one aspect the least, and in another the most important period of our destiny. This life is in one sense the smallest, and in another sense the greatest thing to man.

When you separate the two, and look at them apart, as distinct and rival portions, time for an immortal is a very small thing, and eternity inconceivably great. No comparison can do justice to the difference between them. No imagination can measure how far the infinite future exceeds in importance this passing scene. But when you consider time and man's life on earth as the beginning of his eternity,—that part of it which gives direction and character to all the rest,—then, though it seems a paradox, it is nevertheless true, that the present life is the greatest treasure intrusted to man. This earth is a more im-

portant place for us than any that our feet will ever stand upon, for here all is lost or won.

Time, considered by itself as a portion, is very insignificant; but in its own right place it is more important than eternity itself. In all the universe there is no spot so significant as this globe on which mankind dwell. On it the issues of eternity for all the human race are fixed. Here in our nature Emmanuel wrought deliverance; and here all his people are born and nourished and trained for his kingdom. This life is the germ of immortality; this earth is the nursery for heaven.

You have seen the tiny blossom of the fruit-tree opening in early spring. After basking a few days in the sun, it fades and falls. A germ is left behind on the branch, but it is scarcely discernible among the leaves. It is a green microscopic speck that can scarcely be felt between your fingers. If a hungry man should pluck and eat it, the morsel would not satisfy. Although he dreams of eating, when he awakes his soul is empty. The germ, as to present use, is a sapless, tasteless nothing. Grasped now as an object and end, it is the most worthless of all things; but left and cherished as the germ of fruit, it is the most precious. According as it fades or thrives will the husbandman have joy or sorrow in the harvest.

This life is the bud of eternity; if it is plucked and used as the portion of a soul, that soul will be empty now, and empty for ever. If the husbandman should gather all the germs green, while they are tiny, tasteless atoms hidden among the leaves, he would be disappointed

at the time, and destitute at last. He would gather worthless things in spring, and have nothing to gather in harvest. This life, taken and used as the portion of an immortal being, is green and sour and hurtful. If you pluck it at this stage, you will taste no real sweetness at the time, and possess no ripened store at last. But while the present world thus abused is worthless, rightly used it is beyond all price. Here is generated, cherished, ripened, the life that will never die. Time, from the creation of man to the final judgment, is in God's sight as one day, and that day is an high day in the calendar of heaven. On it, at early dawn, man was made in God's image, and lost that image by his own sin. On it, at high noon, the Son of God took human nature, and died the Just for the unjust. Ere its evening close in darkness, "the whole family of God" will have been born and educated for glory. This day, in the midst of eternity, though it seems small like a lone star in the blue sky, is greater than human thought at its utmost stretch can measure. Man signalized this day by making it a day of perdition; God signalized it by making it a day of salvation.

This view of the earth would make pilgrims at every stage treat it reverently as holy ground. This view of life would infuse a heavenly wisdom into the spirit and conduct of the living. Time's one great day begins with the creation of man, and ends with the coming of the Lord; but already in God's sight that expanse is nothing more than a point; and to ourselves, when from eternity we look back, it will seem a speck upon the infinite. As

one star differeth from another star in glory, this day will shine more brightly than all the rest, for it is the bride's birth-day. It is the date attached to every name in the Lamb's book of life.

2. Let *Now* represent this moment, and *To-morrow* the next. The same object may appear at one time as a lengthened line, and at another as a single point, according as it is presented to the observer. The "now" of mercy's offer, which runs parallel with the human race over all the course of time, is also a moment which passes ere its name can be pronounced. Imagine the whole human race of all generations to be a moving row of living men, like a procession marching along the street. Such, indeed, it actually is, almost without a figure. Conceive the "now" to be a fixed point on the route—a signal displayed from the palace of the King, and left to wave a welcome there throughout that great day, on which the procession is defiling past. From morning till night that same gladsome signal hangs at the same spot; but each man of the lengthened line is compelled to march quickly past, and it remains only a few moments in sight. One man marches forward; others follow, beholding the signal in their turn; but those who have passed cannot see it now, although the sight were their life. Suppose the six hundred thousand Hebrews in the wilderness, when stung by the fiery serpents, formed in one vast column, and defiling, two or three deep, past the spot where the healing emblem hung. The movement occupies one whole day. The healing symbol is like God's present accepted "Now," and the march of the Hebrews past



it is like the course of mankind over time. Mercy abides there all day long, but each passenger sees it only while he passes. If the wounded do not look when he is at the spot, he will go forward diseased, and perish beyond, although others coming after him are still getting life from the look.

Now is displayed from heaven, an invitation from its Lord to the generations of men, as they are gliding past it like a stream. He holds it out all the day, from the morning, when he made man in his own image, till that gathering night, when a mighty angel shall proclaim that time shall be no more. He has never drawn it up, although the provocation has been great; and will not draw it up till the last man shall heave in sight and look upon it. To the race it is a line stretching over all time; but to the individual it is only a point. For narrowness it is a point, but it is the point of the sceptre extended from the hand of the King; and the law of the kingdom is, that whosoever touches it shall live. Such and so winsome has Mercy made *to-day*, that men might be persuaded not to put their trust in an unknown *to-morrow*.

We know not what a day may bring forth. Behind the dark curtains of the future, to-morrow lies concealed. She is travailing in birth; and what shall her offspring be? Whether weal or woe, whether sickness or health, whether prolonged probation in this life or quick removal to the judgment-seat, is unknown and undiscoverable. "We all do fade as a leaf." And how does a leaf fade? Two main features characterize the manner of its fall—certainty and uncertainty. In one aspect nothing is more

fixed, and in another nothing more fluctuating. All those myriads that now glitter in the sunshine or flutter in the breeze will be strewn on the ground ere the year die out; but when this one shall fall, and how long that one shall hang, no tongue can tell. One falls smitten by a mildew soon after it has burst from the bud in spring; a second is withered by a worm at its root in early summer; a third is shaken off by a boisterous wind; and a fourth is nipped by frost in autumn. In what part of the year any leaf will drop is wholly uncertain; that all will be down ere the year be over is absolutely sure. We may see in this fragile mirror the reflection of our own frailty. The generation now living will in a few years be all beneath the dust; but the departure of each is as uncertain as the dropping of the leaves. Some drop in childhood's spring, some in the bloom of youth, some in the maturity of manhood, and some hang on till the winter of age arrive. These two things are terribly clear—the time is short to all, and the short time is uncertain to each.

An artist solicited permission to paint a portrait of the Queen. The favour was granted—and the favour was great, for probably it would make the fortune of the man. A place was fixed, and a time. At the fixed place and time the Queen appeared; but the artist was not there, —he was not ready yet. When he did arrive, a message was communicated to him that her Majesty had departed, and would not return. Such is the tale: we have no means of verifying its accuracy; but its moral is not dependent on its truth. If it is not a history, let it serve



as a parable. Such a disappointment might spring from such a cause. Translate it from the temporal into the eternal. Employ the earthly type to print a heavenly lesson.

The King Eternal consented to meet man. He fixed in his covenant and proclaimed in his word the object, and the place, and the time of the meeting. It is for salvation; it is in Christ; it is now. The "faithful Creator" has been true to his own appointment. He came, not to condemn, but to save; He came in Christ, God manifest in the flesh. He waits now to embrace returning prodigals. If they abide among their husks to-day, and come running and panting to-morrow, they may find that the door of mercy is shut, and the day of redemption past. Have you felt a fainting of heart and a bitterness of spirit when, after much preparation for an important journey, you arrived at the appointed place, and found that the ship or train by which you intended to travel had gone with all who were ready at the appointed time, and left you behind? Can you multiply finitude by infinitude? Can you conceive the dismay which will fill your soul if you come too late to the closed door of heaven, and begin the hopeless cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us?"

XLIII.

THE COUNTENANCE OF A FRIEND.*

"Iron sharpeneth iron: so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."—xxvii. 17.

WHEN an iron tool becomes blunt, an instrument of the same material is sometimes employed to restore its edge. In such a case, literally "iron sharpeneth iron." This process is compared to the quickening influence which a man's countenance may exert on the flagging spirit of his friend. As an instrument made of steel may, when blunted, be sharpened again by another instrument also made of steel; so a man, when cares oppress his spirit and cloud his face, may be brought to himself again by intercourse with a brother who has a more sprightly countenance and a more hopeful heart.

A man's mind is liable to become dull in the edge as well as the tool which he handles. The moral bluntness is as common as the natural, and springs from a similar cause. Much application, especially on hard and unyielding subjects, rubs off the sharp edge of the intellect, and renders it less capable of successful exertion. A man in this condition is like an artisan compelled to work with a blunted instrument. The effort is painful and the progress slow.

* The greater portion of this chapter was first printed in "Excelsior," vol. ii. James Nisbet and Co., London.



For a blunt tool or a weary spirit we are not limited to one application. Many whetstones lie within our reach, of various material and various virtue. One of the chief is, "the countenance of a friend." Bring the downcast into the presence of a true friend; let a brother's countenance beam upon the worn-out man; let it sparkle with hope and speak encouragement: forthwith the blunted mind takes on a new edge, and is able again to cut through opposing difficulties. Every one who knows what care is has experienced the process of blunting; and every one who has a friend knows how much power there is in human sympathy to touch the soul that has become like lead,—as heavy and as dull,—and sharpen it into hopeful activity again. Perhaps no human body was ever animated by a spirit of more ethereal temper than Saul of Tarsus; yet, even after the quickening of grace was superadded to the natural intensity of his intellect, Paul himself was beaten broad and blunt by many successive blows on coarse, cross-grained material, and burst into glad thankfulness when he felt the countenance of a friend touching his spirit and restoring its tone: "We were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless, God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus." While he acknowledges God as the source of all consolation, he confesses with equal distinctness that the instrument which applied it was the face of a friend.

We are wonderfully made, both as individuals and as members of a community. Each man is a separate being,

conscious of his own personality and continued identity, and amenable to the Supreme Judge for himself alone; yet each has as many separate relations as there are persons with whom he holds intercourse in the various offices of life. We influence others, and are in turn affected by them. Many of the human faculties cannot be exercised except in society. Man would scarcely be man if he were prevented from associating with his kind. It is not good for man to be alone. Solitude rigidly maintained and long continued produces insanity. One half of the human faculties are framed for maintaining intercourse with men, and one half of the divine law is occupied with rules for regulating it.

Social meetings are not evil. Those who are zealous for righteousness in the world are compelled to speak of them often in terms and tones of stern disapproval; but, though human intercourse frequently becomes the occasion of sin, human beings are, in every instance, the guilty cause. The concourse of numbers for social enjoyment affords an opening by which the tempter may come in; but even in the face of such a danger, we dare not advise that the door should be wholly and for ever shut. Watch and pray against temptation on every side, but forbid not the meeting of man with man, whether in seasons of joy or of grief.

The countenance of a friend,—the mark of glad recognition after protracted absence,—the intelligence that looks out of every feature, and the love that kindles all into a glow,—the countenance of a friend, with all that is in it, is a wonderful work of God. It is a work as great and good as the sun in the heavens; and, verily,



He who spread it out and bade it shine, did not intend that it should be covered by a pall. When the Creator had made so good a sun, he hung it in the midst of heaven that all the circling worlds might look on its beauty and bask in its rays. So, when he makes a "lesser light" of equal brilliancy,—a loving human countenance,—he intends that it should shine upon hearts that have grown dark and cold. Social, or, if you will, convivial parties, are the outgoing of instincts which our Maker has planted in our being. A convivial meeting is one where men eat their bread together, getting and giving reciprocally meantime rays as sweet as sunlight from the faces of friends. Why should not the sons of God meet thus, and bless each other as brothers, while they are fed by a Father's hand? Alas! when they meet, Satan still presents himself among them. When the avenues of the heart are fully opened to admit a brother's love, an evil spirit glides in to possess and defile. But it is not the happy, mirthful face of a friend that stings and kills. There is no evil in it: behold, it is very good. Let "Holiness to the Lord" be written on it, and then enjoy freely the society of men. We may eat our bread together, and look on each other's faces while we eat, and thank God for his goodness. Meetings are not evil; social meals are not evil; cheerful conversation is not evil; kind looks are not evil. Christians! here is a work to be done, a battle to be fought, a victory to be won: wrench these good things from Satan's hands, and let the children of God, for whom they are provided, enjoy their own again.

The human countenance!—receptacle of a thousand joyful impressions, that at a signal leap into their places simultaneously, and crowd and flit, and glow and glitter there, a galaxy of glory, a teeming, overflowing source of manifold and wide-divergent consolation; the human countenance,—oh, thou possessor of the treasure, never prostitute that gift of God! If you could and should pluck down these greater and lesser lights that shine in purity from heaven, and trail them through the mire, you would be ashamed as one who had put out the eyes and marred the beauty of creation. Equal shame and sin are his who takes this terrestrial sun,—a blithe, bright, sparkling countenance,—and with it fascinates his fellow into the Old Serpent's filthy folds!

In a certain Italian city, not many years ago, six men of diverse age, and rank, and attainments, were sitting late at night around the table, within the dwelling of one of their own number. Each had a Bible in his hands. Each man looked alternately down on that blessed book, and up on his brother's countenance. Both were beaming, and the light that shone in both was a light from heaven. As iron sharpeneth iron, so these persecuted disciples of Jesus sharpened mutually their own broken spirits by looking on each other's faces while they conversed upon the word of life. The spoiler came. The agents of a despot broke suddenly into the chamber, and dragged its inmates to prison. But a friendly countenance reached the martyrs there, and healed their broken hearts. The face of that Friend whose presence gave "songs in the night" to Paul and Silas in the inner prison at Philippi,

bursts yet through every barrier to cheer the hearts of those who suffer for His sake.

This soul is obliged, in the conflict of life, to force its way through hardnesses which, sharp though it is, destroy from time to time its penetrating power. It strikes suddenly upon temptation, upon worldly cares, upon pains, upon bereavements; and, onward farther in its course, it must strike upon the armour of the last foe. When the spirit is sorely blunted on all these, and turned into lead by contact with the last, how shall it acquire a keenness, whereby it will be able to go with a glance right through the armour of death, and gain the victory? The sharpener provided for this extremity is still the countenance of a Friend. As iron sharpens iron, a Man is provided to quicken in the last resort the sinking soul of man. For our adversity a Brother is born. It is this countenance lifted up, and looking love on a human being in the hour of his need, that will revive the downcast spirit, and put a new song into fainting lips. By the countenance of that Friend, falling with its holy light on the solitary pilgrim at the entrance of the dark valley, the spirit, in the very act of departing, has often been brought to a keener edge than it ever knew before; and then, conscious of power, and fearless of obstacles, it has leaped forth, and darted away like light, leaving the bystanders gazing mute on the illumined wake. When they regain their lost breath, and dare to break the silence in presence of the placid dead, it is to whisper to each other, through struggling tears and smiles,—"What hath the Lord wrought!"

XLIV.

CONSCIENCE.

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion."—xxviii. 1.

No *man* pursueth; and yet a pursuer is on the track of the fugitive, otherwise he would not flee. Pursuit and flight are in nature correlatives, and constitute an inseparable pair. Pursuit follows flight, or flight precedes pursuit, as an advancing body casts a dark shadow forward or backward according to the direction of the light. His own shadow may be, and often is, the most terrible pursuer that ever dogged the steps of a criminal. A swift foot does not avail the man who is fleeing from himself. When Cain shed his brother's blood, no man pursued the murderer; yet he was pursued. He was hunted like a deer by dogs. His own apprehension was, "I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me." Every bush that waved in the wind became the avenger of Abel, and made the life-blood curdle in Cain's heart. This was the Lord's doing in that early age; and the same method is still adopted in the government of the world. A man has committed murder, and successfully concealed his crime. No human eye but his own witnessed the deed; no other human ear heard the groans of the victim; no officer of justice



arrested the perpetrator. Yet he is pursued and arrested: in some cases, his shadow-pursuers drag him in by force, and hand him over to the constituted authorities for trial: in other cases, they hold him in their own thin arms, and glare on him with their own fiery eyeballs, exacting, all his life long, a severer punishment than any that lies within the province of a human judge.

When they escape from man, God is the pursuer of the guilty. "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me." He bows his heavens, and comes down for vengeance as well as for mercy. The "invisible God" has a way of making his presence felt. A reflector fixed in the human constitution points ever to its Author, as the magnet points to its pole, whatever the windings of life may be. With more or less of distinctness, this mirror receives and reveals the frown or the smile that sits upon the Judge's brow. Thus, in effect, God is present in every human breast. Conscience within a man is one extremity of an electric wire, whose other extremity is fastened to the judgment-seat. This apparatus brings the Judge and the criminal terribly near to each other. If peace has not been restored, enmity in such close contact is intolerable.

Unable to tolerate it, the guilty betakes himself to flight. No man pursues him, yet he flees as if from armed legions. Whenever and wherever the fugitive may halt to recover breath, his pursuer is still at his heels. The reflector which he carries within himself ever points in one direction, and ever reveals the face of God. Although he should flee from human abodes, and dwell in the heart

of earth's deepest desert, the same sun would shine on him there, and the same mysterious tablet in his own soul would receive its burning beam. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy!" "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

A man may be saved from death by seeing the reflection of danger in a mirror, when the danger itself could not be directly seen. The executioner with his weapon is stealthily approaching through a corridor of the castle to the spot where the devoted invalid reclines. In his musings the captive has turned his vacant eye towards a mirror on the wall, and the faithful witness reveals the impending stroke in time to secure the escape of the victim. It is thus that the mirror in a man's breast has become in a sense the man's saviour, by revealing the wrath to come before its coming. Happy they who take the warning,—happy they who turn and live! The truth-teller is troublesome, and men besmear its bright surface with the thick clay of various pollutions, that the light which glances from it may no longer go like a sharp sword through their bones. You may dim the surface of the glass so that it shall no longer be painfully bright, like a little sun lying on the ground; but your puny operation does not extinguish the great light that glows in heaven. Thus to trample conscience in the mire, so that it shall no longer reflect God's holiness, does not discharge holiness from the character of God. He will come to judge the world, although the world madly silence the witness who tells of his coming.

Conscience is in many respects the most wonderful



element in the constitution of man. It is the point of closest contact and most intimate communion between us and the Father of our spirits. None of the human faculties constitute so hard a problem in mental philosophy. It has never fully melted yet in the crucible of the metaphysical analyst. Considering its position and uses, we need not be surprised that it more thoroughly eludes our search than other faculties of our nature. Thereby chiefly God apprehends us: thereby chiefly we apprehend God.

By "the wicked" we must not understand only those who are reckoned criminals by human governments. If heathen darkness covers the people, or searing has gathered hard and thick round a man, nothing short of bulky crimes can disturb the conscience; but where the true light shines, his own sins may oppress the penitent while the neighbourhood rings with his praise. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." He who uttered that confession was probably reckoned a saint in the city where he lived. Light from God's word without, and a quickened conscience within, revealed transgressions, like a cloud for number and for blackness, while the spectators saw nothing but virtue in the suppliant's life. He has looked in upon his own heart, and back upon his past life, and upward to the righteous Judge, and forward to the great day, and in all the horizon swept by his straining eye no spot appears where conscience can find a resting-place.

Who shall stand between the fugitive and his pursuer? Who shall settle the controversy between an unclean con-

science and a just God? The question points, as John did, to the Lamb of God who taketh sin away. There is one Mediator between God and man. Terrors are sent as messengers of mercy to arouse loiterers, and compel them to flee. While Lot lingered in Sodom, the angels were urgent; the urgency of the angels was irksome to Lot. But when the saved man looked from his refuge in the mountain down upon the burning city, he was glad that the consuming fire passed before him as an image to terrify, before it fell from heaven in its substance to consume. The warning was troublesome, but it saved his life. It is better to be roughly awakened to safety, than to perish asleep. So think many now, in earth and in heaven, who in the day of mercy feared coming wrath, and fled from the wrath to come. The fugitive gets "boldness to enter into the holiest," when he enters "by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. x. 19.)

XLV.

SIN COVERED AND SIN CONFESSED.

'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."—xxviii. 13.

THIS verse is divided to our hand. The separating lines are very distinctly drawn. They mark at once the appropriate place of each portion, and the mutual relations of all. Two persons are introduced; two opposite courses are ascribed to them; and two correspondingly opposite results are predicted. The one covers his sins, and therefore shall not prosper: the other confesses and forsakes his sins, and therefore shall have mercy.

The two distinct yet closely related subjects are the *covering* and the *confession* of sin, with the consequences that follow either course. Two kinds of seed are sown in spring, and two kinds of fruit are gathered in harvest. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

1. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper." Few people know what sin is; and those few do not know it well. Both the name and the thing which it signifies are common; and yet neither is well or widely understood. Men cover their sins because they know a little of them, and then the covering prevents them from learning more. They suspect that the knowledge would not be pleasant, and therefore keep it out of the way. They

would call that prophet willingly, if he would prophesy good concerning themselves.

Sin is in a man at once the most familiar inmate and the greatest stranger. There is nothing which he practises more, or knows less. Although he lives in it—because he lives in it, he is ignorant of it. Nothing is more widely diffused or more constantly near us than atmospheric air; yet few ever notice its existence, and fewer consider its nature. Dust and chaff and feathers, that sometimes move up and down in it, attract our regard more than the air in which they float; yet these are trifles which scarcely concern us, and in this we live and move and have our being. The air which we breathe every day and all day affects our life and happiness more than those occasional meteoric phenomena which excite the wonder of the world. The air exerts a predominating power on life, independently of the thought or thoughtlessness of those who breathe it. Such, in this respect, is sin. It pervades humanity, but in proportion to its profusion men are blind to its presence. Because it is everywhere, we do not observe it anywhere. Because we never want it, we are not aware that we ever have it. But to ignore its existence does not change its nature, or remove its effects. Sin decisively affects the time and eternity of men, although they neither observe its presence nor dread its power. Our ignorance or indolence cannot change the law of God and the nature of things. Sin is sin in its character and consequences—in its present guilt and future doom—although the sinner die without discovering the element in which he lived. "Be-

hold, I knew not," will neither arrest nor annul the sentence, "Depart from me." The true reason of the sinner's ignorance is the greatness of his sin. If it had been some brilliant feather floating in the air, he would have followed it with his eye, and inquired into its origin: but the air itself—he lived in it, and therefore never became aware that there was such a thing.

Beware of the old, stolid, atheistic blunder, of counting that nothing exists which cannot be seen. Moral evil is invisible as the human soul, or God its maker; yet it exists, and its effects are great. God unseen rewards the search of those who seek him; sin unseen punishes the neglect of those who seek it not. If you diligently seek for God your friend, he will be your rewarder; if you diligently seek for sin your foe, it will not be your destroyer. The acute and learned Saul of Tarsus, did not discover his own sin until his journey to Damascus, although it wrought constantly as a law in his members. It was because it lay so near that he failed to observe it. A scratch on the skin is more easily discovered than a poison circulating in the blood. Alas! we know better every trifling accident that occurs in the world, than the enmity to God which reigns at first in all, and troubles even disciples to the last.

But the knowledge of sin, difficult by the nature of the thing, is rendered still more difficult by positive efforts to conceal it. Life has three sides like tablets, on which moral character, good or evil, is graven and displayed—an aspect inward, an aspect outward, and an aspect upward. The corresponding departments of duty, as ex-

pressed in Scripture, are, "to live soberly and righteously and godly." But when in any or all of these directions a man comes short, an evil heart of unbelief makes an effort to conceal the sin. Watchers and witnesses stand round the man on all the three sides. Himself, his neighbour, and God, observe and condemn the various forms of transgression.

Criminals are not the only class who strive to hide their deeds from the sight of men. Reputable citizens occupy much of their time, and expend much of their energy, in the task of making themselves seem better than they are. But after covering his sin from his neighbour the hypocrite must take up the more difficult task of concealing it from himself. A busy court is constantly in session within a human heart. Opposing parties are ever wrangling there. Nowhere is special pleading more cunningly employed to make the worse appear the better reason. No effort is spared to hide the ugly side of sin, and set off its more seemly parts as virtue. The imaginations of man's heart, evil themselves, are constantly employed like clouds of artisans in weaving webs to cover other evils.

But the chief effort of the alienated must ever be to cover his sins from the sight of God. The arts are manifold; and they are practised in secret: it is not easy to detect and expose them. The strong man armed who maintains possession of the citadel puts forth all his strength to prevent the entrance of a stronger One. As long as a human heart is held by the prince of darkness, the human faculties enslaved are compelled to



guard the gates against the Light of Life. The key-note of the carnal is given by the possessing spirit: "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus? art thou come to torment us?" All the wiles of the tempter and all the faculties of his slave are devoted to the work of weaving a curtain thick enough to cover an unclean conscience from the eye of God. Anything and everything may go as a thread into the web; houses and lands, business and pleasure, family and friends, virtues and vices, blessings and cursings—a hideous miscellany of good and evil—constitute the material of the curtain: and the woven web is waulked over and over again with love and hatred, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, to thicken the wall without and deepen the darkness within, that the fool may be able with some measure of comfort to say "in his heart, No God!"

But "he shall not prosper" in this effort to cover his sin. God cannot so be mocked: his laws cannot so be evaded. Although sin in its spiritual nature cannot be seen by human eyes and weighed in material balances, it is as real as the objects of sense. Although its essence is not palpable, its power is great. If it be not destroyed, it will become the destroyer. If it be not through grace cast out of a man in time, it will in judgment cast the man out from God and the good at last.

Certain great iron castings have been ordered for a railway-bridge. The thickness has been calculated according to the extent of the span and the weight of the load. The contractor constructs his moulds according to the specifications. and when all is ready pours in the mol-

ten metal. In the process of casting, through some defect in the mould, portions of air lurk in the heart of the iron, and cavities like those of a honey-comb are formed in the interior of the beam; but a whole skin covers all the surface, and the flaws are effectually concealed. The artisan has covered his fault, but he will not prosper. As soon as it is subjected to a strain the beam gives way.

The catastrophe, you reply, is due to the violation of physical laws, and we all know that they inexorably and impartially chastise transgressors. For that very reason has the example been taken from the domain of the natural laws. You know that it is foolish to hide a sin in the heart of the iron. It shall not prosper. Laws which you see in operation will avenge the trick. The case belongs to matter and its essential properties. The senses take cognizance of the fact. We believe it, because we see it.

Well; sin covered becomes a rotten hollow in a human soul, and when the strain comes, the false gives way. If the hypocrite, through the merciful arrangements of Providence, be tried and tested in this life, the fair appearance will collapse, and a deceived heart, taught by terrible things in righteousness to know itself, may yet find God a Saviour. It is thus that the trial of faith "is much more precious than of gold that perisheth" (1 Peter i. 7). The fall which reveals a fatal defect, before it is too late to obtain a remedy, is in form a calamity, but in essence and effect the best of blessings. If no severe pressure come to test the spurious goodness within the limits of



this life, it may hold together until it be out of sight in the grave. But it is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment. The strain which will try every man's work is put on there. The unsoundness caused by covered sin will be detected then. The assize and the condemnation are not visible. If men refuse to believe what they cannot see, they must even wait until they get their own kind of evidence. If a material generation in a material age will make sure that there is no flaw in the iron which spans the river and bears their goods; and go with the hollow which covered sin has left in their souls to meet the final judgment; they must even be left in unbelief to take in conviction when it can no longer lead to life. "Seeing is believing." That curt proverb will receive a terrible fulfilment. When the Lord comes the second time, "Every eye shall see him:" but they who are first convinced then shall "believe and tremble."

2. "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." The subject in the second member of the proverb is that genuine confession which stands opposed to the covering of sin. It tells us what such confession is, and what it obtains. Reformation is the test of its character, and pardon its blessed result. There is a relation of a close and interesting kind between confessing and forsaking sin. Confession is false, unless the confessed sin be also forsaken; and actual amendment is unsound at heart, unless the forsaken sin be also confessed. Neither can stand alone. They must lean on each other.

Confession is made to Him against whom the sin has been committed. All sin is sin against God; to God therefore confession of all sin should be made. Some acts offend also a brother; and in these cases confession should be made also to him.

The confessional system of Rome is false from the foundation. It blasphemously puts a man in the place of God. Its roots are rotten, and its branches cannot bear fruits of righteousness. Instead of securing that the sin confessed shall be forsaken, its natural tendency and common effect is to prepare the way for repetition. It is like a merchant's monthly clearance, leaving the room empty for another set of accommodation bills, to be cleared out in turn when the next month is done. So violently did this abuse outrage even men's natural sense of right, that it became the hinge on which, in its earliest stage, the Lutheran Reformation turned.

True confession is made to God. The human spirit must come into direct contact with the Divine. The Father of our spirits permits the child to approach himself on such an errand: and the offspring man has faculties fitted for converse with God a spirit.

When confession is real, it is complete. The same conviction which shows a sinner that he ought to confess, shows him that he ought to confess all. If it is not a confession of all, it is not confession. It is the old trick of covering the sin. When the spirit of adoption is attained, the confesser, with the simplicity of a little child, gives the keys of his heart to God, and welcomes the Omniscient Searcher into all its secret chambers.



True confession will produce actual forsaking of sin, as a living root sends up branches, spreads out blossoms, and nourishes fruit. If a son far separated in residence, and long alienated in heart, relent at length and humbly invite his father to forgive and visit him: and if evil men and evil works find harbour still in the son's dwelling, before the father's visit the place will be purged of its disreputable occupants. If the son is still wedded to these companions and these pursuits, he will not sincerely invite his father to come in; if he really desires that his father should come in, he will at the same moment and under the same impulse drive out the offenders. It is thus that true confession to God, in the nature of the thing, carries with it an abandonment of the sins confessed; and if the sins confessed are not effectively abandoned, the confession has been a lie. If the persons and things that displeased the father are not dismissed, the son, whatever he may have said, did not actually desire that the father should visit and inspect his dwelling.

There is also a relation between making confession of sin and obtaining mercy from God. Sin is confessed, forsaken, forgiven; so lie the links of this short chain. When sin is cast out of the heart, it neither works any more as a ruling power in the man's members, nor lies as condemning guilt in the book of God. It is sin hidden, and so made still the object of your choice, that has power either to pollute or destroy. Sin cast forth from the heart is harmless. It cannot then pollute the life; and it will not then remain an element of treasured wrath. Similar facts and laws may be found in nature.

Some substances which on the surface of the earth cannot hurt a child, may, if pent up within the earth, rend the mountains or engulf a city.

If any one fear lest this representation should rob God of his glory, and ascribe the initiative to man, let him look again, and look more narrowly into the process.

First of all, the confession of the sinner did not provide the mercy of God. That mercy was complete before he confessed his sins, before he committed the sins which he confesses. First and last the mercy is divine. It is the Father's love; Christ's sacrifice; the Spirit's ministry. It was finished when Messiah died. Bought by the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, it was waiting in full free offer when first man's need began. The penitence of sinners did not make God gracious. His mercy is all his own, and his glory he will not give to another.

Further: the confession and reformation of sinners did not open in the treasured fountain of mercy a channel which was formerly shut. Before the man confessed, not only was the fountain full, but the stream was flowing. It was beating on the door of his closed heart. It ran waste because he shut it out; but all the work of grace was done by God, and all the glory of grace due to God, before that callous nature opened to receive it. When at last the barrier gave way, mercy flowed in; but the man's confession neither made the mercy in its upper spring, nor charged therewith the channels which unite the earth to heaven.

But, once more and chiefly, confession, so far from

being the cause, is the effect of divine mercy. You see on the surface of the word here that confession obtained mercy; but you must look beneath and learn what produced confession. It was mercy. The promise is, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." That promise was in substance made before any sinner confessed, otherwise there never would have been on earth any confession of sin. That promise has power. It touches a sinner while he is dead, and hard, and still as a stone—it touches and moves him. It touches his heart, and makes it flow down like water in confession; it touches his life, and leads him into the paths of righteousness. Had there been no such gracious offer from God, there would have been no such submissive surrender by man.

This is a circle, you say. The sinner who confessed obtained mercy, and that very mercy caused the sinner to confess. So it is; and it is like God. All the worlds are globes, and all their paths are circles. His dispensations circulate. All good comes forth from himself, and all glory returns to himself. His mercy displayed, broke the stony heart, and caused the confession to flow; the confession flowing, opened the way for mercy to enter. If I have not a broken, contrite heart, God's mercy will never be mine; but if God had not manifested his mercy in Christ, infinite and free, I could never have a broken, contrite heart.

This principle may be seen reflected from the darkest event which has yet sprung from the war in India. Some hundreds of British men and women with their children

were shut up within a hastily reared and imperfect fortification at Cawnpore. A numerous enemy swept round their crazy fort, and cut off all hope of escape. When heat and hunger had well-nigh done his work for him, the insurgent chief approached and offered terms to the enfeebled garrison. They surrendered on the heathen's promise, confirmed by his oath, that they should all be permitted to depart in safety to their friends. The promise was cruelly broken, and the broken promise has wrung the nation's heart and nerved her soldiers' arms; but the promise produced the surrender. The promise of life, when trusted, had power to open those gates, which the enemy could not have forced, as long as a living defendant stood within. Another garrison in a neighbouring city were surrounded afterwards in a similar manner by the same faithless foe; but they have not opened their gates, and certainly never will. No promise is held out to them, at least no promise in which they will confide. They will trust no white flag held up by those bloody hands. They will fight in hope as long as they can, and when hope dies, they will fight in despair; but fight they will to the uttermost and to the end.

So would sinners fight against an angry God, if he did not promise free pardon, or if they did not trust the promise made. It is the promise of life that makes the dying open their gates.

When we were unjustly suspecting the true God, as our countrymen justly suspected the heathen chief,—when we, like stupid children, were refusing to trust in redeeming love,—Jesus, who came to show us the Father,



taught us, as they teach little children, by a picture. The picture is the prodigal son. We are all familiar with the scene. Its features, great and small, are graven on our memories from our earliest childhood, and maintain their place even to old age.

In upon the callous heart of the worn-out and weary profligate, when his pleasures were palling and his flesh was pining away from his bones,—in upon his dry, desolate heart darted the memory of a father's love; down into the depths of that long alienated spirit sank the conviction that his father's fondness was still unchanged. That power overcame: he said, "I will arise and go to my father:" he arose and went. These are the objects that loom dimly in the back-ground; but look!—hush! These figures full in the fore-ground,—who are these? Many false and foolish things are said of canvass paintings; but this picture, which Jesus gave in his word, of the Father's mercy winning a wanderer back,—of a wanderer so won, making full, frank confession of his sin, and getting instant free forgiveness,—this is the picture for me. See the figures! They move! they move! The Father ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him; and he, the worthless, lay upon the Father's bosom. It is all over: on this side there is no upbraiding, on that side no distrust.

A simple-minded disciple once said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." What that good man desired to see, surely our eyes have seen. God, as Jesus shows him to us,—"God is love."

XLVI.

THE FEAR OF MAN BRINGETH A SNARE.

"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."—xxix. 25.

THIS "fowler's snare" is spread at every turning in the path of life, and many "silly birds" are entangled in its folds. Shall I do what I know to be right, in order to please God; or what I feel to be wrong, in order to gain the favour of men? When the question is so put, the answer is easy. On this point the knowledge of the true is universal; but the practice of the right is rare. Few act the answer which all agree to speak. The men of this day would fain be accounted far-seeing, and yet in its leading principle their policy is emphatically short-sighted. That devoted missionary of the olden time, who "looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," was on a better tack for both worlds than those of our day who plume themselves on looking to what they call the "main chance." He who endeavours to secure his own interests by pandering to the prejudices of men "is blind, and cannot see afar off." Safety lies on the other side.

Neither the snare nor the victim is confined to one class. There are endless varieties in the character and the condition both of the fearing and the feared. At one time the material of the snare is a monarch, and at



another time a mob. Either is in its own place suitable for the destroyer's purpose, and either becomes to those who stumble into it what the spider's web is to the flies. The victims, too, are various in character and rank. Little children and grown men, poor and rich, subjects and princes, are each in turn caught in this cruel snare.

The evil begins at a very early stage of life. For Infants the snare is thoughtlessly spread, and infants thoughtlessly step in. Those who have charge of children very frequently teach them in words to speak the truth, and by deeds entrap them into falsehood. The fear of man is a dreadful thing to a little child. When you conjure up terrors before his eyes, and accumulate threats, in order to deter him from one transgression, you are digging a pit which will insure his fall into a worse. When you utter exaggerated threatenings, by way of making an impression, you silently make allowances for your own exaggerations; but the infant, at least in the earliest stages of his experience, takes all for truth. He is filled with a great fear of you and your promised punishment. When he commits a fault, this fear rises up like a giant before him, and prevents him from confessing it. He invents a lie in order to escape the punishment, and another lie as a buttress to the first. The poor child is taken in the snare, but they are not guiltless who laid it across his path. Even when no previous threatenings have been uttered, children magnify in their own imaginations the pain of expected punishment; and the temptation to deceive is thereby proportionally increased. Early and earnest effort should be made to elevate the

fear of God into potential predominance over the fear of man in an infant's mind. Severe punishments for trifling faults, on one extreme, demoralize as much as the utter abandonment of discipline on the other. Encourage to the utmost a truthful confession of the fault, by making it tell effectually in favour of the culprit. Adopt a policy that favours confession, and never throw artificial barriers in its way. In education let the chief aim ever be to make love of truth before the living God the power paramount in childhood's little busy life. Dethrone, as far as it lies in your power, the fear of man, and let the fear of the Lord reign in its stead. Dread of punishment by a parent or a master cannot and should not be extinguished: its action is salutary, when its position is subordinate. There is no safety in the commonwealth while the supreme authority is in abeyance, or wielded by a usurper's hand.

An event stands in distinct outline on the field of my memory, far distant in the otherwise dim back-ground of early childhood, relating to a certain little hammer which I lifted from its place without leave, and broke by unskilful handling. Dismayed at the sight of the damage which I had done, and dreading the retribution which might succeed discovery, I hid the fragments under a chest of drawers in the room, and retired into a corner to meditate a plan of defence. When the case came on, I emitted a declaration to the effect that I knew nothing of the hammer or its fate. Experienced eyes easily read guilt in my countenance. The broken hammer was dragged from its hiding-place as a witness against me. The fragments, flourished in my face, choked my utter-

ance, and refuted my flimsy plea. I was summarily convicted. When I expected smart correction, my sister, who presided at the inquiry, gravely pronounced, from a hymn which we all knew well, the words—

> "He that does one fault at first,
> And lies to hide it, makes it two.

She paused, looked solemnly sorrowful in my face, and went away. I received no punishment; but my sister, acting a mother's part, although only thirteen years older than myself, was grieved because I had told a lie. My sister's silent grief that day went deeper in and took a firmer hold than any correction by a material rod that I ever received. She gently introduced the instrument, and, not by violence, but by a sort of lever power and inclined plane, lifted the child's spirit up from the fear of man, where it was insnared, and set it on the fear of the Lord, where it was safe. For reward, she had from beneath the gratitude of a motherless boy, and from above the blessing of the orphan's God.

For Servants, too, this snare is thoughtlessly spread, and servants thoughtlessly step in. In maintaining discipline among servants, as in all other human things, there are two opposite extremes, which are both dangerous, and one path in the middle which is safe. There is a measure of strictness which is in effect, as it is in design, a hedge planted by kindness along their path to keep them from wandering; and there is a measure of strictness which, whatever may be intended, actually becomes a snare for their feet. There is a tendency in our

nature to permit the power of things unseen to wane like Saul's house, while the power of things seen waxes like David's. If wheat and chaff are mixed in a vessel, and the whole mass shaken violently from side to side, the chaff gradually comes to the surface, and the wheat lies unseen at the bottom. It is thus that, in the jostlings of human life, trust in the Lord goes down out of sight, while the fear of man comes up, and exerts the supreme control. Where grace is in active operation, this dreadful law may be held in check by constant prayers and constant pains in the opposite direction. But external forces, instead of being employed to check, are, by a perverse ingenuity, exerted to augment the power of evil already too strong in nature. Servants are too apt to magnify, as an object of terror, the discovery of a fault by a master, and proportionally to make light of the faulty act as a sin against God. Thus the fear of man becomes a snare. It is the duty of a master or a mistress in this respect to treat servants wisely and tenderly. Beware lest, by inconsiderate harshness, you make their path more slippery, and hasten their fall. If you successfully train them to fear God first, the service which they render to you will be more valuable, even in the market of the world, than service rendered by persons who have no higher master than yourself, and no greater fear than a fear of your displeasure. This fear of man, when it overrides the fear of the Lord, is both a snare which entraps the servant into sin, and a misfortune which injures the interests of the master. When the fear of a mistress is more powerful in a servant's heart than a trust in the Lord, the de-

sire to do what is right is thrust down into a subordinate place, and the desire to conceal what she has done wrong becomes the governing motive. This is disastrous alike to the moral character of the dependant and the material interests of the chief. Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and also of that which is to come. A servant who fears God but not you, will in your absence and in your presence alike endeavour to do well; a servant who fears you but not God, will study by all means, and at any sacrifice, to conceal from your knowledge whatever would displease you. It may be demonstrated from the nature of the case, and observed in the history of the world, that in this department of life the fear of man bringeth a snare, and a trust in the Lord is safety to the interests of all. The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad.

It is to Ministers of the gospel that this many-sided proverb is most readily and most frequently applied. So be it. Those of them who know their Master and themselves, instead of putting in a plea of exemption, confess their need of the reproof, and claim the benefit of the warning. When they endeavour to act on Paul's advice to the ministers of Ephesus,—"Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock,"—they find this word of God peculiarly profitable. It is given to strengthen a weak point, where the enemy too frequently effects a breach.

But when a minister is publicly preaching the word, two fears, both connected with man, but very different in character and consequences, flutter out and in and around his heart. The one may be described as a fear

of man, and the other as a fear *for* man. They lie near each other, and in some aspects present almost the same appearance; but in nature they are opposite as good and evil. A fear for man—an old, a young, a rich, a poor, a proud, or a timid man, may and should possess the preacher's heart while he proclaims the gospel;—a fear lest, from defects in the preacher, or peculiarities in the hearer, or both, any one should have his prejudices offended, and be driven off from the truth and the Saviour. A fear of man,—influential by station, by wealth, or by numbers, may and often does knock for entrance at the preacher's heart, and bid him please the powerful. The one fear is an angel of light, and the other an angel of darkness. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish their outward forms and secret forces. The angel of darkness puts on the garments of an angel of light. Fear of man that leads to unfaithfulness may successfully personate the prudence that would take him by guile for his good; and fear for man, which is really the wisdom of the serpent wielded by a disciple of Christ, may seem to be selfishness pandering to power. The two lie as near to each other as the sparkling eye of Tell's living child and the apple that lay on his head. He who would cleave the one without hurting the other must have a clear eye and a steady hand. It is only in very obvious and outstanding cases that man is able to judge. To his own Master every servant in this work standeth or falleth. A minister must draw his supplies from the fulness of the Godhead treasured up in Christ. Seeking there, he will find grace at once to speak boldly as he ought to

speak, and be all things to all men, that he may gain some.

The Press as well as the pulpit is liable to be unworthily affected by the fear of man. This mighty tree, whose branches afford a lofty perch for the fowls of heaven, and far-spreading shade for the beasts of the earth, has in modern times sprung gradually and unexpectedly from a very small mustard-seed, dropped into the ground by our fathers. It is an instrument of immeasurable reach and inexpressible power. Already it has done much for the religious, and more for the civil liberty of men. It is probable that this engine is destined to great uses hereafter in preparing the way of the Lord. Men are busy girdling the globe with a network of electric wires. Each State covers its own territory for its own purposes; but when the machinery is all ready, the Supreme Monarch may see meet to appropriate the whole, and thereby circulate his own message in every language and in every land. The press has in its nature great capability; but in the meantime a twofold weakness practically cripples its power: It has too much fear of man, and too little trust in the Lord. When it obtains a faith in God as its fountain of life, and shakes off the fear of man which impedes its motion, the power of that instrument may yet beneficially affect the world, to an extent of which we cannot now form any adequate conception. When all things work together for good, this one will work mightily.

To these and to other classes the principle of this proverb is applicable; but its meaning may be still more

clearly illustrated by specific instances in which the operation of the principle is historically exhibited.

The Jewish rulers "straitly threatened" Peter and John, and "commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." Here the fear of man was woven into a snare, and spread across the path of the messengers who after Pentecost went forth to preach the gospel to every creature. But these bands were broken asunder by the faith of the Galilean fishermen like threads of tow before the flame: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts iv. 17-22). In the same strength have the martyrs of every age borne the cross, and thereby reached the crown. The steadfast step of these trustful witnesses easily breaking through the snare might, indeed, serve indirectly to illustrate the lesson of the text, but that lesson may be more vividly taught by the hopeless struggle or miserable end of those who have stumbled and fallen.

Herod the king was one notable example (Mark vi. 14-29). A woman with a fair skin over a black heart threw the foolish man off his guard, bound him hand and foot, and led him captive. "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger," said this female fiend. This unexpected demand, like a peal of thunder, awakened the effeminate drunkard from his cups. There was a sharp conflict in the king's breast. Two opposite principles, the fear of man and the fear of God, struggled for the mastery within him. Before men he feared the reproach



of vacillation if he should break his promise; before God he feared the torment of a guilty conscience if he should murder the innocent. The struggle was sharp and short. The fear of man was too much for the king, and he had no trust in the Lord to protect him from its onset. Ah! these "lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee," had heard him say it, and he feared their scorn if he should draw back. He gave the executioner his order, and saw the ghastly dish delivered to the damsel. Often afterwards did the wretched king flee from that gory head when no living man pursued him.

Pilate fell into the snare, and Felix after him. Through fear of a mob and their leaders, the one governor crucified the Lord, and the other imprisoned his disciple. Time would fail to tell of the snares that were spread, and the victims whom they caught in the days of old.

The latest and greatest example is now running its course in the East, with a continent for its theatre, and for spectators the civilized world. Our Government in India has through fear of man fallen into a snare, and the nation has paid the price in tears and blood. The Government has propagated heathenism, and repressed Christianity; made the teaching of the Koran imperative in all public institutions for the natives, and forbidden the reading of the Bible in any; constituted their army in a large measure of a heathen priestly caste, and sternly prohibited the missionaries from approaching the soldiery with the name of Christ. Idolatry was authoritatively maintained in the army of Bengal, and Christianity forcibly excluded. Such are the melancholy facts, and

the motives are more melancholy still. This disastrous course was not a principle, but a policy. The ruling powers supported idolatry and excluded the Bible, not because they thought that course right, but because they expected it to be profitable. The grand design was to keep the people quiet. The chief aim of the governing power was to fish the pearls of India's wealth, and therefore they desired above all things to fish in smooth water. They feared the tumults of the people more than God. The British Government practically denied God in the heathen's sight, in order to keep the favour of the heathen. The policy was certainly not godly, but was it gainful? Read the answer in the events of the day. The events point distinctly to their cause in the just displeasure of God. The rebellion has been raised by the soldiery from whom Christian missionaries were excluded, and not by the people to whom the missionaries had access. Of the army, moreover, the portion that has rebelled is precisely the portion whose false religions the Government protected and pampered. So plainly do our disasters point to our sins, that men of all ranks and parties, with unwonted unanimity, have read the same lesson from the history. No voice is raised now to defend our past policy. At present, in the time of our distress, it appears to be the unanimous demand of the nation, that while absolute freedom of conscience shall be accorded to all, henceforth the superstitions of India shall be left to themselves, and the gospel of Christ owned, protected, and encouraged. May this mood of mind remain when the calamities which produced it shall have

passed away. For the future the rulers of India may select from the Bible and hang up in their council hall the motto of a policy older and better than their own: "The fear of man bringeth a snare; but *whoso trusteth in the Lord shall be safe.*"

The fear of man leads you into a snare; and will the fear of God make you safe? No; if the character of the affection remain the same, you will gain nothing by a change of object. If you simply turn round and fear God as you feared man, you have not thereby escaped. The fear of the greater Being is a greater fear. The weight presses in the same direction, and it is heavier by all the difference between the finite and the infinite. When this terror of the Lord bursts in upon the unclean conscience, the man instinctively begins to reform his life with a view to the judgment. The Ethiopian falls a washing at his skin. It grows no whiter under the operation; but he washes on. He has a terrible presentiment that if he cannot make it white he will perish. He experiences a secret hatred of God for being so holy, but he conceals the enmity and continues his struggle. His life is spent in painful alternations between partial external efforts to please the God whom he dreads, and heart dread of the God whom he is unable to please.

It is not a transference of fear from man to God that makes a sinner safe. The kind of the affection must be changed, as well as its object. Safety lies not in terror, but in trust. Hope leads to holiness. He who is made nigh to God through the death of his Son, stands high above the wretched snares that entangled his

feet when he feared men. The sovereign's son is safe from the temptation to commit petty thefts. A greater interval divides the tortuous courses of the world from the serene peacefulness of a redeemed and trustful soul, waiting the signal for his exodus, and rejoicing in the anticipation of rest. When you know in whom you have believed, and feel that any step in life's journey hereafter may be the step into heaven, the fear of this man and the favour of that will exert no sensible influence in leading you to the right hand or to the left.



XLVII.

PHILOSOPHY AND FAITH.

"The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal, Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell? Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."—xxx. 1–9.

THIS last portion of the book is distinguished from all the rest by several strongly marked peculiarities. It suggests some difficult but interesting questions in criticism. The chief difficulty lies in the first verse, and refers to the four terms which the translators have taken as the names of four persons. It is still uncertain whether these should be read as proper names, or as ordinary Hebrew words, expressing a specific meaning. It is well known that Hebrew names are always significant, and therefore it is not surprising that such an ambiguity should occur. The interpretation of the subsequent discourse, however, is not at all dependent on the solution of a philological difficulty in the introduction; and, accord-

ingly, we adhere to our rule of avoiding exegetical discussions, and occupying ourselves exclusively with the lessons that come easily, like ripe fruit when the branch is slightly shaken. If Ithiel and Ucal are proper names, the record commemorates the persons, otherwise unknown, who sat as scholars at the sage's feet: if not, the words, like the heading of a chapter, indicate that the prophet's subject for the moment is an inquirer's search after God. Whether the first verse, which constitutes the title, be intended to name the audience or intimate the preacher's theme, the discourse itself remains the same. It is its own interpreter. The meaning is obvious, the form elegant, and the matter grave.

At the entrance of the temple, this worshipper of the Truth stoops very low: "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have I the knowledge of the holy" It is truly spoken, thou ancient seer; this attitude becomes thee well! This man has already worshipped oft within Truth's awful dome, and hence the sweet humility that clothes him. Those who have never been within, hold their heads higher at the threshold. It was Isaac Newton who, in respect to the knowledge of physical laws, felt himself a little child picking up a pebble on the ocean's shore. Since his day, some who have learned less have boasted more. The same law rules in the spiritual hemisphere. Paul was, in his department, as eminent as Newton, and therefore as humble. They who know most, feel most their want of knowledge, whether the subject be the covenant of

grace or the laws of nature. The secret—if a matter so obvious can be called a secret—lies here: Those heroes who, in their several lines, march foremost, do not compare themselves with other men. They do not look backward to measure themselves with those who are coming up behind. By habit, they keep their faces forward and upward. The sense of lowliness which sits so seemly on a great man's brow, is produced by the heights of knowledge or holiness yet unscaled, which tower to the heavens always in his sight. "Who hath ascended up into heaven?" This question explains how a philosopher counts himself ignorant, a saint counts himself unclean. It is a precious practical rule, to look towards heaven while we measure ourselves. To keep the eye, not on the little which a neighbour knows, but on the much of which ourselves are ignorant, is the surest method of repressing pride and cherishing humility. God will raise up those who thus keep themselves down, for "He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

This observer deliberately measures himself against the magnitude of God's works in creation, that he may experience, in the fullest measure, a sense of his own low estate. Humility is sweet to the taste of the humble. Those who get a little of this gentle grace desire more. Like other appetites of an opposite kind, it grows by what it feeds on.

Having thus, for personal profit, introduced the subject, he displays both accuracy and comprehensiveness in his method of handling it. These few words sketch, in three departments, an outline of the mundane system. After

suggesting, in general terms, the whole question of the Divine work and government,—"Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?"—he proceeds to specify the departments in detail:—

The air, atmosphere,—"Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?"

The sea,—"Who hath bound the waters in a garment?"

The earth,—"Who hath established all the ends of the earth?"

There is an obvious and interesting relation between this reverential acknowledgment of God's governing power and the subsequent request,—"Feed me with food convenient for me" (verse 8). He intends afterwards to ask "daily bread," and therefore he begins with the invocation, "Our Father who art in heaven." Before he utters the specific request for the supply of nature's need, he looks up to the Father of lights, from whom every good gift comes down. He ascribes the power to God, and enumerates the agencies in nature whereby he works his will. The discourse is philosophically accurate, as well as religiously devout. It is through the mutual relations of air, earth, and water, that the Supreme Ruler gives or withholds the food of man. These three, each in its own place and proportion, are alike necessary to the growth of grain, and, consequently, to the sustenance of life. It is by the agency of these three working together for good that the Father of all supplies his creatures' wants.

The Earth is the basis of the whole operation. From its fertile bosom it brings forth fruit sufficient to sustain

all the living creatures that move upon its surface. It is wisely constructed to serve the purposes of God and satisfy the wants of men. "Who hath established the earth?" Its hills and valleys, echoing to each other, answer, God. Its cohesive mass and its waving outline, its soft surface and its solid frame, are well-defined marks of its Maker's hands. Alike in its creation and its arrangement, its material and its form, the final cause of the earth has obviously been the growth of vegetation and the support of life.

But the earth could not bear fruit at any portion of its surface without the concurrence of Water; and how shall the supply of this necessary element be obtained? "Who hath bound the waters in a garment?" Again the clouds and showers, the springs and streams, with one voice answer, God. So wide is the dry land, and so low lies the water in its ocean store-house, that we could not even conceive how the two could be made to meet, unless we had seen the cosmical hydraulics in actual operation from day to day, and from year to year. Here lies the earth, rising into mountains and stretching away in valleys, but absolutely incapable, by itself, of producing food for any living thing. There lies the sea, held by its own gravity helpless in its place, heaving and beating on the walls of its prison-house, but unable to arise and go to the help of a barren land. Even although these struggling waves should at last beat down the barriers and roll over the earth, the flood would not fertilize any place, but desolate all. The brine would scorch the world like a baptism of fire. Unless a gentler, sweeter, sprinkling

can be contrived, the earth might as well have been, what the moon is thought to be, a waterless world.

In this strait,—when the land could not come to the water, and the water could not come to the land,—a mediator was found perfectly qualified for the task. "Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?" The Air goes between the two, and brings them together for beneficent ends. The atmosphere softly leans on the bosom of the deep, and silently sucks itself full. The portion so charged then moves away with its precious burden, and pours it out partly on the plains, but chiefly on vertebral mountain ranges. Thus the continents are watered from their centres to the sea. The fertility of the earth depends absolutely on the mechanical aid of the air in the process of irrigation.

When I stood beside Niagara, listening to its low but awful hum, and gazing on its gathered waters rushing impetuously toward the sea, I saw one of the larger veins through which the world's life-blood flows back into the world's mighty, ever-throbbing heart. Looking upward from the same spot, I saw white clouds careering in close succession, in the opposite direction, through the bright blue sky,—the purified blood going outward by the arteries to repair waste and maintain vitality in every portion of the complex frame. How different, and yet how similar, are the mechanical arrangements whereby, in the larger and lesser systems, the pure blood is carried outward for use on one line, and the used blood carried back for purification on another, without any risk of collision on the way! No two things can be more like each other in

character than the river system of a continent, as represented on a map, and the veins of a human hand as seen through the skin. The Author of the mundane system is also the Author of organic life.

He who holds the winds in His hand controls directly the world's supply of food. Famine scourges a land, or plenty gladdens it, according as these cloudy chariots with their load are sent in this direction or in that. Some portions of the earth, such as the Sahara in the interior of the African continent, are so situated with respect to the atmospheric currents, that the winds waft no rain-clouds over them; and, as a consequence, they lie in unmitigated and perpetual barrenness. These belts of dry, barren sand, show men what the world would have been if its Maker had not commanded his winds to water it. In the progress of modern art, certain unprofitable and unpromising moors have been rendered fertile by a manure which is imported at great expense from tropical climes. In these cases the operators take care to leave a strip of the field untouched by the fertilizer; and the barrenness of this bit in contrast with the rank growth of the rest proves to the owner the value of the agent. On the same principle, the deserts which occur here and there on the globe prove to forgetful men their dependence on Him who binds the waters in a garment and gathers the wind in his fists.

The laws which regulate the land and the water lie much more within the reach of our observation than those which the winds obey. We can predict the time of the tides, and measure the breadth of a continent; but

we cannot tell when a shower will fall and when the sun will shine. Rain depends directly on the wind, and the wind to us is very uncertain. Air, whether in motion or at rest, is under law to God as much as earth and water. Every blast is under law as strictly as the steady swell of the tidal wave; but the causes in operation are so far removed, so numerous, and so varied, that the calculation of the results baffles all human skill. The majestic door of plenty stands in our sight upon the earth. Wind is the key which opens or shuts it. The hand which holds that key is kept high in heaven, and covered with a cloud; but every movement on the earth's surface is absolutely controlled by that unseen hand.

But this student of Nature is a worshipper of God. When philosophy fails him, he falls back on faith. He seems, indeed, to have commenced his physical researches with the conviction that he could not carry them far, and does not conceal his satisfaction when the obscurity of creation affords him an opportunity of magnifying the word. By a series of seven consecutive questions without a single answer, he shows that the evolutions of nature are not a sufficiently articulate revelation of God. Against that disappointment, as a dark ground to set off their beauty, lean the short and simple lines of light, "Every word of God is pure." This inquirer, like the writer of the nineteenth Psalm, skilfully employs even the glories of creation as a foil to the "glory that excelleth" them in a more perfect law. After a painful and unsuccessful search for God in nature, he turns round to the word, and through that pure medium beholds

the light which otherwise is "inaccessible and full of glory."

The transitions are quick; and yet the steps are obviously connected and consecutive. Those who discover experimentally that God's word is pure, will find out also that "He is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." This learner is far in advance of his starting-point now. He set out in quest of knowledge to gratify a curious intellect: he ends by finding rest for a troubled soul. He addressed his question successively to the air, and the water, and the earth; but they were all dumb. They sent back to him only the echo of his own cry. Turning next to the Scriptures, he finds what he sought, and more. His darkness vanishes, and his danger too. No sooner has he learned that the word is pure, than he feels that the Speaker is gracious. He has traversed this path before: he knows it well. He goes over it again, in pity for those who are still groping without, that he may lead them "into that which is within the veil."

Having obtained a privilege, he is not slow to take advantage of it. Having found God to be a Father, he quickly exercises the rights of a child: "Two things have I required of thee: deny me them not before I die." A remarkable precision of conception and expression may be observed in this ancient prophecy. As in the observation of nature, so also in the reflex examination of his own spiritual state, the survey of the whole is comprehensive, and the distribution of parts exact. Measuring carefully the weakness that lay within, and the dangers that lay before him, he perceived that the two extremes

were the points of exposure, and pleaded accordingly for support there. He saw one set of temptations pressing on the wealthy, and another set of temptations pressing on the poor. He feared that if he should be exposed to either stream, he would be carried down like a withered leaf on the water. Desiring to "live righteously," he dreaded the extreme of poverty; desiring to "live humbly," he dreaded the extreme of prosperity. He pleaded, therefore, for a safer place between the two. He who so seeks will certainly find. He may not, indeed, obtain the medium between poverty and riches which he counts so favourable to spiritual safety; but he will obtain the spiritual safety on which his heart is set. He will obtain his end, which is good, either through the means which he specifies, or others which God judges better. The Captain of his salvation will either keep the weak safe in the centre, or strengthen him to fight on the flanks.

Three distinguishing features in this prayer supply corresponding lessons for present use: the requests are specific and precise; the temporal interests are absolutely subordinated to the spiritual prosperity of the suppliant; and a watch is set against the danger to a soul which lies in extremes either of position or of character.

1. Prayer should consist of specific requests, proceeding on grounds that are known and felt by the suppliant. None of us would dare to go into the presence of an earthly sovereign with bundles of unmeaning words, fashioned to sound like a petition. Petitioners who stand there experience a pressing want, cherish a hope of relief, and present a definite request. Go and do like-



wise when you pray. Survey your own and your neighbours' need; consider the ground on which your plea may rest; express your request, whether for two things or for ten; and when you have expressed it, cease. The precision of this antique collect is a sharp reproof of every dim word-cloud that floats above men's heads, and calls itself a prayer.

2. The chief desire should be set upon the chief good. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. The grand aim of this ancient Israelite was to keep the relations of his soul right towards God; and he made his material condition subservient to his spiritual attainments. The aim of this anxious heart comes articulately out in his prayer: "Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Wealth is desired or dreaded, not for its own sake, but as it might serve to help or to hinder the progress of grace in his soul. It is especially worthy of notice, that while he sees in the fore-ground two opposite temptations, pride on this side, and dishonesty on that,—ungodliness, to which both errors equally lead, is the ultimate object of his fear. More than wealth or poverty, more than even pride and dishonesty, he feared and loathed in thought beforehand the possible issue to which by either line an unstable heart might be led,—sin against God. The Lord will preserve those who so fear him. When we are jealous for him, he will be a shield to us. The common method of men is to set this world's good silently in the centre of their aim, and cram in as much religion at the edges as the space will hold.

The method adopted here is the reverse. It is first, How shall I please God? and then let my relations to the world take shape accordingly. If we make Christ the Master, he will make the world wait upon his children; but if we permit the world to be master, we have no part in Christ. If we put either object out of its proper place, we thereby destroy for ourselves its value. The wealth which is ranked first will not satisfy; the religion which is dragged in second will not save.

3. This suppliant observed the danger of extremes, and set a watch against it on either side. Riches and destitution, as to temporal possessions, are not the only extremes which threaten the safety of a soul. They are as various as human character and condition. The Church of the Reformation was intensely doctrinal, but it was not practically missionary. It searched the Scriptures for life, but did not occupy the world for work. The legs of the lame are unequal: that revived Church was crippled even in the vigour of its youth. It is too early yet to pronounce whether the Evangelical Church of the present will stumble as much on the other side. We have acknowledged the world as our field, and are spreading ourselves over it for labour. If we maintain the truth and live on it as the Reformers did, and work for the whole world as they did not, it may be that the Lord will do great things for us and great things by us in the coming days.

Much good is effected in the world by earnest men fixing on chosen objects, and prosecuting them with all their might. I do not, I dare not, bid any such enthusiast in

the Lord's service retire from the work; but I advise him to watch and pray lest he get damage from the exclusiveness and intensity of his pursuit. A miner has fallen faint under the effect of foul air in the pit; another generously descends to the rescue. The act is right; but the rightness of the act will not prevent the foul air from choking the devoted man, if he abide too long under its influence. You may be absorbed in a good thing, and yet suffer spiritual damage by the absorption. Much devotion may become a snare, if it take you from work; much work, if it take you from devotion. I do not say that any one should flee from the extremes because they are dangerous. The danger does not lie in being on the edge, but in being unwatchful there. Go wherever the Lord in his providence calls you; abide wherever congenial work lies to your hand; but in every place watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.

XLVIII.

LEMUEL AND HIS MOTHER.

"The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?"—xxxi. 1.

ANOTHER appendix to the book, in the words of a certain king Lemuel. Like Agur of the preceding chapter he is personally and historically unknown. The mark of the mother's faith is left in the name of the son, for it signifies one dedicated to God. There would be nothing contrary to the analogy of ancient practice in supposing that Solomon gave some of his lessons under this significant designation, but the circumstances otherwise do not suit his character and history. It is pleasant to cherish the hypothesis, in itself by no means improbable, that Lemuel was the king of some neighbouring country, and that his mother was a daughter of Israel. We know that idolatrous practices were imported into Jerusalem by daughters of heathen princes admitted by marriage into the royal house of Judah: it is probable on the other hand, that glimpses of light sometimes fell on those heathen lands, through the marriage of their princes to Hebrew women who worshipped the living God. The instructions given to the heir-apparent, with special reference to his future reign, have already come under our notice in preceding chapters, and therefore,

passing over the substance, we call attention only to the circumstances of the lesson here.

The monarch, in the very act of publishing the prophecy, proclaims that he received it from his mother. Two memorable things are joined together here in most exquisite harmony. It is not, on the one hand, the bare historical fact that a godly mother wisely trained her son: nor is it, on the other hand, merely another instance of a young man acting his part well in the world. The peculiar value of the lesson consists in the union of these two. We know not only the good counsels which the mother gave, but also the effect which they produced on the character of her son: again, we know not only the practical wisdom of the son, but also the source of it in the godly counsels of the mother. The fountain is represented visibly supplying the stream; and the stream is distinctly traced to the fountain.

The mother has departed from the stage, but her son arises and blesses her. She did not personally publish her instructions in the assembly of the people: but her instructions reached the people in a more becoming and more impressive form. She knew her own place, and kept it. Whatever questions might divide the court or agitate the multitude, she remained beside her child, dropping wisdom like dew into his soul. She had seed in her possession, and knew that God "gives seed to the sower." By sowing it in the soft soil, and in the time of spring, she made the return larger and surer. Her honour is greater as published by the life of her son, than if it had been proclaimed by her own lips.

The prophecy recorded here is an honour to Lemuel as well as to his mother. The king is not ashamed to own his teacher. His frank ascription of the credit to his parent, is the highest credit also to himself. He began to set a higher value on the lessons, when the lips that taught them were silent in the grave. Knowing that the stream would no longer flow from the living fountain, he constructs a reservoir in which he may hoard his supply. Thus did Lemuel with filial affection collect and reproduce the lessons of his mother. He was not on that account less dignified in council, or less bold in war. Young men frequently fall into great mistakes in determining for practical purposes what is mean and what is manly. Very many of them in making a spring for the sublime, plunge into the ridiculous.

There was a certain three-fold cord of maternal love which this parent was wont to employ, and which remained in its form as well as its power in the memory of her son: "My son, the son of my womb, the son of my vows." "My son" is the outmost and uppermost aspect of the relation. This is a bond set in nature, felt by the parties, and obvious to all. On this she leans first when she makes an appeal to his heart. But at the next step she goes deeper in. She recalls the day of his birth. She goes back to that hour when nature's greatest sorrow is dispelled by nature's gladdest news,—"A man-child is born into the world." By the pains and the joys of that hour she knits the heart of her son to her own, and thereby increases her purchase upon the direction of his life. But still one step farther back

can this mother go. He is the "son of her vows." Before his birth she held converse, not with him for God, but with God for him. She consecrated him before he saw the light. The name given to the infant was doubtless the result of a previous vow. In this channel and at this time a believing mother's prayers often rise to God; and surely his ear is open to such a cry. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should cast the character of the man in the mould of the mother's faith before the child is born? It is a fact indisputable though inscrutable, that mental impressions of the mother sometimes imprint themselves on the body of the infant unborn, in lines that all the tear and wear of life cannot efface from the man. When we are among the mysteries either of nature or of grace, it does not become us to say what can and what cannot be. What gift is so great that faith cannot ask—that God cannot bestow it?

Dedication of an infant before or after birth may be misunderstood and abused. As a general rule, it is not safe to determine the capacity in which the man shall serve the Lord, before the character of the child has been manifested. Such a dedication to the ministry of the gospel has in some cases become a snare and a stumbling-block. It is presumptuous in a parent so to give a child for the ministry as to leave no room for taking into account his bent and qualifications. For aught that you know, the Lord may have need of a Christian seaman or emigrant in a distant land, and there may lie in embryo within your infant the faculty which

in these capacities might be more wisely laid out, and bring in a more abundant return. The sure and safe method is, to offer them to God, and plead that he would save and use them for himself, but leave the special sphere to be determined by events. It is known to some extent already, and when the books are opened it will be better known, that sons of believing mothers' vows have been the chosen instruments of the greatest works for the kingdom of Christ and the good of the world. Dedicate them to the Lord; but ask the Master to determine the servants' sphere, and watch for indications of his will.

XLIX.

A HEROINE.

"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies," &c. &c.—xxxi. 10–31.

THE last page of the Proverbs displays the full-length portrait of a heroine. There is an extraordinary fulness in this description. It is a model character, brought out in high relief, and finished with elaborate minuteness. In the original, the peculiar resources of Hebrew poetry are all employed to beautify the picture, and fasten it on the memory.

Verses 10–12 serve to introduce the theme. They constitute a stately porch through which we enter the gorgeous galleries within. The interrogation, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" seems to intimate that few of the daughters of men attain or approach the measure of this model. As usual with rare things, the price is high; it is "above rubies." The meaning obviously is, that a virtuous woman is above all price. Woman is the complement of man—a necessary part of his being. As no man would name a price for his right arm or his right eye, woman shoots over all the precious things of earth, and there is no standard by which her value can be expressed. "The heart of her husband trusts in her;" and he is not deceived, for he trusts "safely." A woman's nature and gifts are provided by the Creator as a pillow for man to

rest his head upon, when it is weary with the journey. An help-meet designed and bestowed by our Father in heaven, "she will do him good and not evil all the days of his life."

At the 13th verse the details begin. The design of the picture is to display the practical virtues that operate day by day in the common affairs of life. Many leafy branches, bearing useful fruit in abundance, wave before us in the wind all through the chapter; and not till the very close do we reach the root of godliness that nourishes them all. Look at some leading features of the portrait —some of the larger jewels in this woman's crown.

Industry.—Her hands are full of useful occupation. Nor is this the eulogy of a woman in a lowly condition of life. These are not the qualifications of a menial servant, but the accomplishments of a noble matron. Lemuel learned this poem from his mother's lips, and delighted to rehearse it after he became a king. People make egregious mistakes in regard to the qualifications which go to constitute a lady. In a wealthy mercantile community these mistakes are at least as rife as in families that are related to royalty. It is generally observed, indeed, that the shorter the period of time which separates a rich family from daily labour, the more careful they are to obliterate all its marks. Although there are outstanding exceptions, in which sound common sense has put conventional falsehood to flight, we need not attempt to conceal the fact, that a numerous class of females practically count uselessness an essential constituent of ladyhood.

I do not frown upon refinement—I do not counsel

rudeness; but I warn womankind that error on one extreme is as common and as great as error on the other. Here, as in other regions of human duty, there is a path of safety in the midst, and a dangerous pit on either side of it. Some females, in the effort to avoid vulgarity, are bound body and spirit in swaddling-clothes, and blanched into a sort of full-grown infancy. Their greatest dread seems to be lest others should suspect them of being able to put their hands to any useful employment. They may dismiss their fears, for generally the matter is made so plain, that there is very little risk of misconception. I most earnestly counsel mothers to throw off artificial trammels, and dare to be sensible and free in judging how their daughters should be trained. The power of helping themselves, besides affording a line of retreat in the event of disaster, will double the enjoyment of life, although prosperity should continue to the end. The lady who has lost, or never acquired, the faculty of performing occasionally with her own hands an ordinary operation about her house or her person, has bartered independence away for ease. We smile at Chinese notions of feminine refinement; but if all the elements were fairly valued, the balance in our favour would perhaps not be great.

The form of the industry is primitive. The spindle and the distaff are its instruments; wool and flax its raw material. In the rural districts of our own land, this species of skill continued till very lately to be considered an essential feminine accomplishment. In my younger years, when the goods of a richly dowered bride were

conveyed on the evening before the marriage to her future home, it was still the custom to set a spinning wheel, fully rigged with its "rock" of flax and its thread begun, aloft on the top of the hindmost cart in the glad procession. I have seen this significant symbol, and it is quite possible I may have joined in the joyous hurra that greeted the emblem of industry as it passed. My mother, whom I never saw, span with both hands every afternoon; and as her eyes were not fully occupied with the work, she kept a Bible lying open on the "stock" of the wheel, that by a glance now and then she might feed her soul while she was employed in clothing her household.

This form of female industry, we may presume, is now conclusively superseded amongst us. It is not necessary, it is not expedient, that industrious mothers in this country should now handle the distaff or ply the wheel. Human nature is pliant, and fitted for progress. We are constituted capable of accommodating ourselves to changes. Other lines lie open for enterprise and effort. Some line should be chosen by each, and prosecuted with vigour. The future of the country will be dark indeed if indolence take possession of its homes. When the progress of art drives out one form of industry, others should be admitted to occupy the space; if the space stand empty in our homes, our progress in art will be a declension in happiness.

Activity.—She is an early riser. This is a great victory over a great enemy. Slothful habits make a family miserable. Early hours appointed, and appointed hours punctually kept, cause the economic arrangements to

move softly and easily, like well oiled machinery, without noise and without jars.

Benevolence.—"She stretcheth out her hand to the poor." Industry and activity would only make a female character more harsh and repulsive, if it wanted this. The presence of the poor is, like the necessity of labour, a blessing to mankind. It provides a field for the exercise of affections which are necessary to the perfection of human character. When material acquisitions are great, and benevolent efforts small, the moral health cannot be maintained. When much flows in, and none is permitted to flow out, wealth becomes a stagnant pool, endangering the life of those who reside upon its brim. The sluice which love opens to pour a stream upon the needy, sweetens all the store. The matron who really does good to her own house, will also show kindness to the poor: and she who shows kindness to the poor, thereby brings back a blessing on her own dwelling.

Forethought.—"She is not afraid of the snow for her household," because she foresaw its approach, and prepared to meet it. While the summer lasted, she laid up stores of food and clothing for the winter's need. Miserable is that family whose female head is destitute of forethought. It is a common and a great evil. In a land of plenty such as this, ten homes are made unhappy by want of method, for one that is made unhappy by want of means. Look forward, and so provide that you shall not be obliged to run for the covering after the snow has come.

Elegance.—When she has provided all the necessaries

of life for her family, and contributed to relieve the wants of the poor, she puts on ornaments suited to her station and her means: "Her clothing is silk and purple." She deserves and becomes it. It is precisely such a woman that should wear such garments. The silk hangs all the more gracefully on her person, that it was wound and spun by her own hands. There is a legitimate place for ornamental female attire; but it is not easy either to define what its limits should be or to keep it within them. Perhaps there is no department of human affairs for which it is more difficult to lay down positive law. We shall venture, however, to give a few simple suggestions, which, if taken by those interested, may be of use as supports on our weaker side.

The dress should, in the first place, be modest. In pure eyes, nothing is aesthetically beautiful which is morally awry. It should not be in form so peculiar, or in bulk so great, as to attract attention from the wearer to the robe. It should not be oppressive to the finances of the family. As a luxury, it should only come in after works of necessity and mercy have been supplied. If it cannot, as in this example, be fabricated by the wearer's hand, it ought at least to be paid from her purse. Dames who sail along the street in silk and purple which is not their own, have no right in any respect to the honour which belongs to women who work with their hands and pay their own way. By the common practice of the country, the man who distributes cotton cloth in cart loads from a wholesale warehouse is of higher rank in commercial heraldry than his neighbour who measures off

the same cotton cloth by yards across the counter. On the same principle, women who wear mountains of silk for which other people must pay, should be reckoned greater operators in their line, than the bare-footed, half-naked, shaggy-haired girl, who has snatched a handkerchief from a passenger's pocket and discounted it at the "wee pawn." The same principle which gives the wholesale merchant the higher honour, should consign the wholesale swindler to deeper disgrace. Finally, those who hang purple on their shoulders should have a change at hand. The silk that must be worn every day will soon grow shabby. This matron is not limited to the silk and purple;—"strength and honour are her clothing" too. She may safely wear elegant garments, who in character and bearing is elegant without their aid. If honour be your clothing, the suit will last a life-time; but if clothing be your honour, it will soon be worn thread-bare.

Discretion and Kindness.—"She openeth her mouth." Ah! this is the sorest strain to which her character has been subjected yet. But if a wife's words are habitually sensible and prudent, her husband's heart learns to trust her, and he experiences no misgiving when she begins to speak. Another lovely feature of feminine excellence is added, "The law of kindness is on her lips." This is one grand constituent of woman's worth. They call her sometimes in thoughtless flattery an angel, but here an angel in sober truth she is,—a messenger sent by God to assuage the sorrows of humanity. The worn traveller, who has come through the desert with his life and nothing more; the warrior faint and bleeding from the battle;

the distressed of every age and country, long instinctively for this heaven-provided help. Deep in the sufferer's nature, in the hour of his need, springs the desire to feel a woman's hand binding his wounds or wiping his brow, —to hear soft words dropping from a woman's lips. The women who, during the late war, smoothed the sick soldier's pillow in the hospital, have as high a place this day in the esteem and affection of the nation as the heroes who led the assaulting column through the breach. Woman was needed in Eden; how much more on this thorny world outside! Physically the vessel is weak, but in that very weakness her great strength lies. If knowledge is power in man's department, gentleness is power in woman's. Nor is it a fitful, uncertain thing. It is a law. When the heart within is right, the kindness is constitutional, and flows with the softness and constancy of a stream. Among the things seen and temporal it is the best balm for human sorrows.

Moral Discipline.—"She looketh well to the ways of her household." This is the key-stone which binds all the other domestic virtues into one. A watchful superintendence of children and servants, with a view to encourage good and restrain evil in their conduct, is a cardinal point in the character of a mother and mistress. A serious defect here is sufficient to dislocate the whole machinery of home. Servants have in their nature all the instincts of humanity. The affections and capacities which find scope in the relations of the family circle are ingredients in their constitution. When by the pressure of poverty they are compelled in early youth to leave their own

homes, these instincts, bereft of their objects, are paralyzed for want of exercise. Young persons suddenly separated from all that glued their hearts to home, are like branches cut from the parent tree. If they are not permitted to grow like grafts into a master's family, the best emotions of their nature will wither for want of sap, or seek the dangerous sweetness of stolen waters. It is disastrous to the interests of all, when love is not bestowed on the one side, or expected on the other. Some measure of a mother's care will, as a general rule, produce a corresponding measure of a daughter's devotion. A portion of the time and energy devoted to expensive entertainments, turned into the channel of consistent, considerate kindness and faithfulness toward the servants, would greatly augment the usefulness and happiness of many families. Servants severed from home by the poverty of their parents, and through the neglect of a mistress not ingrafted into a new moral relationship, become avenging thorns in the transgressors' sides. Opulent families can neither live without them nor be happy with them. There is only one way of relief, and that is the way of confession and amendment. The thorns will continue to prick, as long as the law of the Lord in that matter is despised. The Father of the fatherless is mighty, and the orphans cannot with impunity be defrauded of their right. While a mistress looks well to the work which the servants do, and ill to the way in which the servants go, the economy of the house will halt painfully through all its complicated movements. There are two classes who do not look well to the ways of their households;—

those who do not look to them at all, and those who look to them with a stern, unsympathizing, indiscriminating stringency. For the bones of its strength let the moral superintendence exact obedience from the subordinate, and maintain untarnished the dignity of the chief; but cover these bones deeply with the warm living flesh of human love, so that, while all their force is exerted, none of their hardness shall be felt.

In general, as to the education of females, let parents beware of sacrificing solid attainments for superficial polish. From the time that Salome won her hideous prize by dancing well before Herod and his lords, down to our own day, the world's history teems with examples to teach us that seven devils may hide under the ample folds of all the fashionable accomplishments in a hollow female heart. Sow the vital seed of God's word betimes, and fill their hands with useful employment. Beware of emptiness. As the rich owner of a ship who sails for his own pleasure, and does not need to carry merchandise for profit, loads his ship notwithstanding, for her safety in the sea; so, parents who do not need a daughter's winnings for their own sake, should for her sake make her skilful and keep her busy. Empty hours, empty hands, empty companions, empty words, empty hearts, draw in evil spirits, as a vacuum draws in air. To be occupied with good is the best defence against the inroads of evil.

L.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE—WORK AND REST.

"A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."—xxxi. 30, 31.

THE lessons end, where they began, "in the fear of the Lord." Obedience is traced up to faith. In this last chapter the doctrine of the whole book is illustrated by a bright example. As we traverse the various phases of her character, we seem to be making our way over a well watered and fruitful region, until we reach at last the fountain of its fertility. She "feareth the Lord:" here we look into the very eye of the well which clothed with verdure the landscape of this woman's life. Her faith sent forth these virtues, and then these virtues published her praise. Her good works flowed like a stream to refresh a desert neighbourhood; but the fountain which fed it was her heart's trust in God. Those who are partakers of her precious faith will imitate her abundant labours. When you are led by the Spirit, and strive lawfully, faith and obedience do not jostle each other in your heart and life. Each has its own place assigned it in the covenant of grace, and in true saints each keeps its own place silently and steadfastly, as if regulated by the laws of nature.

The concluding feature of this pattern character is a graceful and congruous termination to the Book of Proverbs as a whole. The key-note of all the hymn is found in the close. Its theme throughout is, Righteousness the fruit of faith. We who live under the Christian dispensation should beware of a fatal mistake in our conception of its distinguishing characteristic. The gospel is not a method of bringing men to heaven without righteousness, or with less of it than was demanded in ancient times. The actual holiness of his creatures is the end of the Lord in all his dispensations, as certainly as fruit is the object of the husbandman when he plants, and waters, and grafts his trees. The death of Christ for sin is the divine plan, not for dispensing with obedience from men, but for effectually obtaining it. Reconciliation is the road to righteousness. God proclaims pardon and bestows peace, that the rebels may submit and serve him. They who feel more at ease in their alienation because they have heard that Christ gave himself for sinners, are trampling under foot the blood of the covenant. Alas! even God's dear Son is made the stumbling-block over which men fall blindfold. A vague impression comes in and possesses a corrupt heart, that personal holiness is in some way less needful under the reign of grace. God is my witness, I have not in these pages taught that men should try their own obedience, instead of trusting in the Saviour for the free pardon of sin: but I have taught often, and once more tenderly repeat the lesson here, that those who do not like the obligation to obedience, have no part yet in the forgiving grace.

Throughout these expositions it has been assumed that human life on earth is a life of labour. The world that man stands on is not a rest for man. Ever since it became the abode of sin, it is like the troubled sea that cannot rest. Toil and suffering are the lot alike of the evil and the good in this life. It is a poor portion for those who have no other. Ah! it is a sad thing to be weary, and have no rest in store! Jesus wept over wearied men, labouring in the fire for nought, and refusing to lay their aching heads on his loving breast. Labouring, sin-laden men, He still says, "Come unto me." If you refuse Him that speaketh, the universe will offer no resting-place, and eternity no resting-time.

But a rest remaineth for the people of God. The coming rest already casts the gentle foretastes of morning twilight over the dark surface of life's labour here. Present toil will give zest to the joy of future rest, and the hope of rest softens and sweetens the labour while it lasts. What may be the enjoyments of those who were never weary we cannot tell, as a man born blind cannot appreciate the pleasures of sight. Those "flames of fire," the angels who do God's pleasure, are happy, doubtless, as they are holy; but they cannot share the rest of the redeemed from among men, for they were never weary. Only the weary rest; and the greater the weariness the sweeter the rest. Heaven to the saved will be better than paradise to the unfallen. The effects of the fall are removed by Christ, and more. Grace will abound more than sin abounded. God is greater than the author of evil. At the winding up of the world, it will not be a



masters put their servants to labour. Let not disciples expect what their Lord has neither provided nor promised. He gives them many pleasures in this life, but these are the pleasures of labour, not the pleasures of rest. This world cannot be their rest, expressly "because it is polluted." It may and should become their meat and drink to do their Lord's will; but still it is a doing, a working, a bearing. They may—they will love the work; but still it is work. They who love the Lord that bought them, are in haste to do something for Him while they are in this distant world; for at home in heaven no such work is needed. Work is very joyful in the prospect of rest: Rest will be very joyful when the work is done.

"Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." Heaven and earth are both beautiful when God gives a shining light, and man possesses a seeing eye. Faith and obedience run sweetly into one.

Near the base of a mountain range, early in the morning of the day and the spring of the year, you may have seen, in your solitary walk, a pillar of cloud, pure and white, rising from the earth to heaven. In the calm air its slender stem rises straight like a tree, and like a tree spreads out its lofty summit. Like an angel tree in white, and not like an earthly thing, it stands before you. You approach the spot and discover the cause of the vision. A well of water from warm depths bursts through the surface there, and this is the morning incense which it sends right upward to the throne. But the water is not all thus exhaled. A pure stream flows over the well's rocky edge, and trickles along the surface, a

river in miniature, marked on both sides by verdure, while the barrenness of winter lies yet on the other portions of the field.

Such are the two outgoings of a believer's life. Upward rises the soul to God in direct devotion; but not the less on that account does the life flow out along the surface of the world, leaving its mark in blessings behind it wherever it goes. You caught the spring by surprise at the dawn, and saw its incense ascending. At mid-day, when the sun was up, and the people passing, that incense was still rising, but then it rose unseen. It is thus in the experience of living Christians in the world. At certain times, when they think that none are near, their intercourse with heaven may be noticed; but for the most part it is carried on unseen. The upright pillar is seldom visible; but the horizontal stream is seen and felt a refreshment to all within its reach. True devotion is chiefly in secret; but the bulk of a believer's life is laid out in common duties, and cannot be hid. These two, alternate and yet simultaneous, separate and yet combined—these two fill up a Christian's life. Lift up your heart to God, and lay out your talents for the world; lay out your talents for the world, and lift up your heart to God.













